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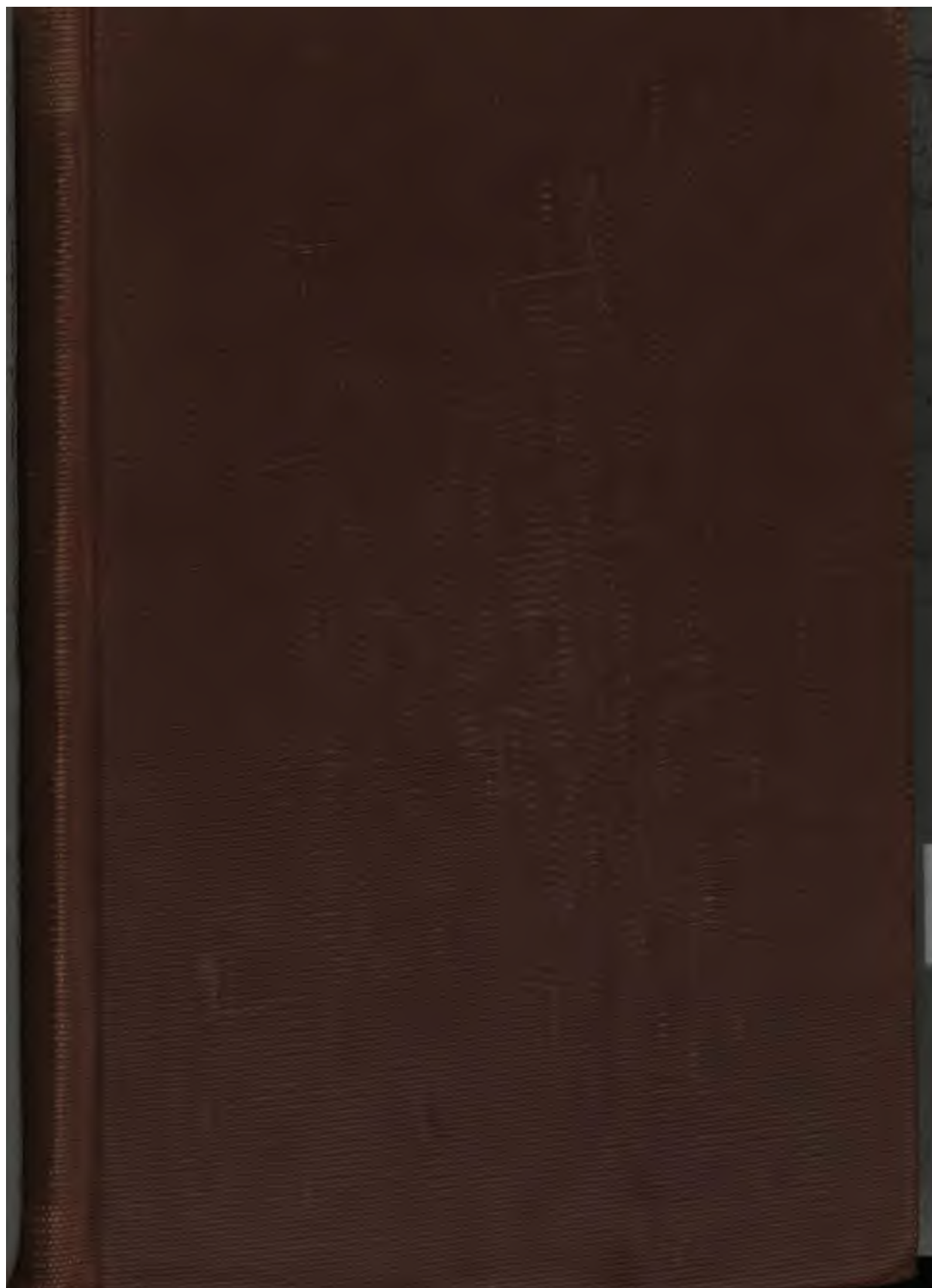
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THE LIFE OF
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.



THE
L I F E
OF
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

BY
WILLIAM KNIGHT, LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY, ST ANDREWS.



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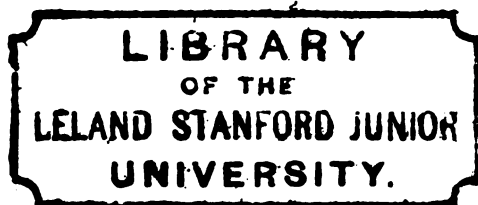
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PREFACE.

No reader of this Life of Wordsworth can regret, so much as the author does, the long delay that has occurred in its publication. Although the first of the three volumes has been printed for more than a year, the issue of the work has been postponed from causes too numerous to mention. When the edition of the Works of Wordsworth—to which this Life was to be an appendix—was projected, eight years ago, the first idea was that a single volume would suffice, both for a Biography of the poet, and for a critical Essay upon him. As soon as the work of research began, however, so much new material accumulated from many sources, that it was judged expedient, not only to extend the Biography from one volume to two, and ultimately to three, but to exclude the critical Essay, reserving it for a future occasion, and a different purpose.

It can be of little consequence to any who read these volumes, to know what the writer thinks of Wordsworth, of his place as a poet in the great hierarchy of genius, and of his function as a teacher of mankind; but it matters a great deal that they should have authentic information as to the manner of man Wordsworth was—as to what he thought and said and did—and that they should know the relations he sustained toward the more distinguished of his contemporaries.

The hitherto unpublished material which the volumes contain far exceeds, in value and importance, what has been added to them from the miscellaneous sources of informa-

tion, open to all students of English Literature. The solitary canto of the projected *Recluse*—already published by itself, but which was intended to appear first in this work—the fragments of *Michael*, the poem on Nab Well (originally designed as a portion of *The Recluse*), and many *nugæ* which the lovers of the poet will not willingly let die; the Alfoxden, the Hamburg, and above all the Grasmere Journal of Wordsworth's sister; the two records of the Continental Tour of 1820, written by Dorothy, and by Mrs Wordsworth respectively; the Journals of other Tours in Scotland, in the Isle of Man, and on the Continent, written by the sister and the daughter of the poet; numerous letters of Wordsworth, to his wife and his sister, to Coleridge, Southey and Sir Walter Scott, to Landor and Talfourd, to Mrs Barrett Browning, to Richard Sharp and Barron Field and John Kenyon, to Scott (the editor of *The Champion*), to Lord Lonsdale and Viscount Lowther, to Henry Crabb Robinson, to Professor Reed of Philadelphia, and to the poet's publisher, Moxon; letters also from Dorothy Wordsworth to Miss Pollard, afterwards Mrs Marshall, and to Crabb Robinson; with others from Mrs Clarkson, and Mrs Arnold—all these are published for the first time. In addition, there are many letters from Wordsworth's correspondents on the question of copyright,—including Mr Gladstone, Sergeant Talfourd, and Lord Houghton,—and some extracts containing notices of the poet, and facts regarding him, from books written by contemporaries now almost forgotten.

It is absurd at any time, and now-a-days it would be ludicrous, for a biographer to assume the rôle of eulogist. To be blind to the weaknesses of a great man is itself a weakness. To enlarge upon them is both foolish and useless; but to conceal them is to be unfaithful to posterity. There is this advantage however in writing the

life of one who has been dead for well-nigh half a century, that there need be less scruple in mentioning characteristics which must also rank as weaknesses, allusion to which would have given pain to survivors, had it been made a generation earlier. There would have been some difficulty, for example, in printing those reminiscences of the Westmoreland peasantry, which Mr Rawnsley has brought together, immediately after the poet's death. The same remark applies to some of the jottings in Henry Crabb Robinson's Diary, and in Barron Field's memoranda.

Both the Diary and the Reminiscences of Robinson are full, not only of his own literary judgments on the questions of the day—which were often as acute as his appreciation was catholic—but also of the opinions of the most eminent of his contemporaries; and they contain some of the best critical estimates of Wordsworth's poems, as they successively appeared. Through the kindness of the Trustees of the Williams Library, I have had access to the rich storehouse of materials which exists in the Crabb Robinson MSS., and have made many extracts from it.

The poets and men of letters who belonged to the earlier years of the nineteenth century—that second spring-time in the literature of England—are so closely associated with each other, that it is impossible altogether to separate their works. To form an adequate estimate of one, we must take account of all the others. This is especially the case with Wordsworth and Coleridge—the two poets who may be said, without disparagement of the rest, to have been the leaders of the whole movement. I have therefore to refer frequently, not only to Coleridge, but also to Southey, Lamb, Scott, Landor, and many others; and it will be seen that a noteworthy feature in Wordsworth's character was his appreciation of his contemporaries.

This has often been denied to him. It used to be said that, in his old age, he cared only for his own poems. A more baseless calumny has seldom been uttered. Superabundant evidence of the opposite will be found in these volumes. It is true that he gave no poet a place among great writers, unless he was a Teacher as well as an author of verses, and unless the outcome of his teaching was to ennoble character. But in Wordsworth there was the total absence of what has been said to be a prevailing weakness of literary men—although I suspect not specially confined to them—viz., jealousy of others. Not a trace of envy toward contemporaries was ever seen in him. On the contrary, the generosity of his appreciation was conspicuous; and, although he withdrew from the men who misconstrued and critically assailed him, he never quarrelled with them. As will be seen in these pages, his relationship to the dearest of his early friends—the one man with whom his name will be for ever associated in literature—was for a time overshadowed by a cloud, and somewhat severely strained; but Wordsworth bore with Coleridge's increasing weakness, with real magnanimity. He believed in him, as a friend and a poet, and felt the marvellous charm and fascination of his genius to the very last. Of Landor and Leigh Hunt, of Montagu, De Quincey, and Hazlitt, Wordsworth sometimes spoke forcibly enough; and it was not his habit to extenuate faults, or to take a rose-water view of a defect in character; but he was never censorious, and he did not make enemies.

I have purposely recorded some of his adverse judgments, because they exhibit him in the capacity of moral analyst, but there was no bitterness in the severest of them. To refer to a single instance. He spoke unfavourably of Sir Walter Scott as a poet, simply because he considered that novels in verse—rhymed romances, or metrical tales—however admirable, were not poems, in his

sense of the term. He never concealed his opinion that amongst

The stars pre-eminent in magnitude,
And they that from the zenith dart their beams,

Scott had no place; "for," he once said, "he has never in verse written anything addressed to the immortal part of man." But where is there a nobler tribute to genius than is to be found in the Abbotsford sonnet, composed before Scott's departure to Naples?

The might
Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes;
Blessings and prayers, in nobler retinue
Than sceptred king or laurelled conqueror knows,
Follow this wondrous Potentate.

A distinguished critic of our time once referred me to Wordsworth's letter to Scott on the publication of *Marmion*, which he characterised as "one of the most consummate specimens of frog-to-bull impertinence in the annals of literature." On receipt of his letter I turned, with some impatience as well as curiosity, to Wordsworth's letter to Scott; and I found simply this, "Thank you for *Marmion*. I think your end has been attained. That it is not the end which I should wish you to propose to yourself, you will be well aware, from what you know of my notions of composition, both as to matter and manner. In the circle of my acquaintance it seems as well liked as the *Lay*, though I have heard that in the world it is not so." The whole point of Wordsworth's criticism was that he would have preferred the subject treated, not so much from the objective, or Homeric point of view. He would have wished it handled, as he had himself attempted to deal with a story of the past, in his *White Doe of Rylstone*. Wordsworth's appreciation of Scott was genuine from first to last.

Toward Hazlitt and De Quincey his feelings gradually

cooled. If anyone should blame him for that coolness, future biographers may mention facts which explain and justify it.

Although the subject is referred to in the introductory chapter to the first of these volumes—written some years ago—I add a paragraph on the end which the biography of a great man may serve, when it is intentionally a storehouse of facts and not a critical memoir. It may be called a quarry, rather than a building; but of what use are our best criticisms, in comparison with an accurate record of what is known regarding those who have been the chief teachers of mankind? The commentary of the biographer is speedily forgotten; but, while our estimates pass away, the lives of the great remain, and remain to teach posterity. It appears to me that to add a running commentary on each incident recorded, instead of letting the incident speak for itself, lessens its influence instead of increasing it. The world is doubtless taught by the mature judgments of its great critics, as well as by the works of its chief thinkers and poets; and to be a just appraiser of new literary products is a noble function. It is a function however which appeals to the few, rather than to the many; and what the many mostly need is the careful collection of all relevant data regarding the chief teachers of the world, the publication of what is helpful to the understanding of these teachers, and the suppression of all that is irrelevant.

One reason why extended critical commentary on Wordsworth is less necessary than in the case of other poets is what may be called the homeliness of his genius, notwithstanding its depth. He had a profound grasp of the deep things of life and of the universe; but he was more homely than any of his contemporaries, not a "poet"—his rustic air—but in the type of "poet," as

an American author wrote to me, "bring all that is necessary for their own understanding; and the best advice that we can give to his readers is to treat him like their own hearts, to commune with him, and be still." It is for this reason that I let Wordsworth—and his sister, wife, and daughter, as well as his numerous friends and correspondents—tell the story of his life whenever it is possible.

Perhaps the best preparation for the study of Wordsworth is the "wise passiveness" of which he speaks so often—the heart "at leisure from itself." Coleridge once said, "Poetry knocks at the door; if there is no one at home, it goes straight away;" and Goethe

Wer den Dichter will verstehen
Muss in Dichter Lande gehen.

If the entrance is sympathetic, there is little need for criticism.

These volumes then being for the most part a collection of facts, whenever the authority for those which are new, (and cannot be found elsewhere in published works), is not mentioned in the footnotes, they are invariably given on the authority of letters or documents to which I have had access, but with the statement of which I have not thought it desirable to encumber the pages. I may add that in this, as in most biographies, a mass of detail, interesting enough to specialists—and which would, in all probability, had it been expedient to continue the Wordsworth Society for a longer time, have found a place in its *Transactions*—is omitted from the Life. It is to be noted that while Wordsworth detested letter-writing, and wrote as little as he could, a great deal of his correspondence survives; nearly thrice as much as is published in these volumes. It might have been desirable in all cases, perhaps, to have indicated where the letters are now preserved. This has been occasionally, but not always, mentioned.

One result of delay in the issue of a Biography, the materials for which accumulate slowly, is that new facts are sure to be discovered, as fresh sources of information open up, which must modify judgments already come to, and which in some instances may affect statements previously made. This is doubtless both an advantage and a disadvantage. There is no such thing as a Biography that could not have been improved by keeping, as there is no single instance of an immaculate literary text. Every author finds that his work could be improved as soon as it leaves his hands. With this he lays his account beforehand, but it is very mortifying in the course of the passage of a book through the press, to discover new facts which completely alter what has been already said. The most important fact of this kind that I have to record is, that long after the first volume was printed off, I discovered a serious mistake, in which I had followed tradition, and described Mrs Wordsworth as the poet's cousin. This I mention at p. 335 of volume one. It was not till I had the opportunity of examining the series of letters addressed by Wordsworth to Mr Moxon, that I found out my mistake. (See vol. III. p. 374.) Mr Hutchinson of Kimbolton, Mrs Wordsworth's nephew, wrote to me lately, assuring me that there was no truth in the tradition; and as I write I receive the following from Mr Gordon Wordsworth, the poet's grandson.

"THE STEPPING STONES, *January 22, 1889.*

"I think I have solved the grand-parental cousinship question. My grandmother left some memoranda as to her family, which have enabled me to draw up a pedigree of them, for four generations back from herself, so complete that I do not think any connecting link can have escaped me. Throughout the eighteenth century, her ancestors were

confined to Cumberland and Durham, and are unlikely to have married anyone from South Yorkshire before that; and they certainly did not after my great-great-grandfather came into Cumberland. The story arose in this way. My grandfather's uncle, Dr Cookson of Windsor, married a daughter of my grandmother's great aunt, which would enable someone to say that the families were already connected. Hence the myth. . . . One of my grandmother's few recollections of her mother is her weeping on her return from the funeral of the poet's mother."

Two other things may be mentioned before I acknowledge my debt to those who have helped me in this work. I have elsewhere spoken of Wordsworth's profound appreciation of the results of Science, and his grasp of its principles. Another important point is his insight into the great Questions of the Ages, those ultimate philosophical problems, which he never handled speculatively, but of which he had his own intuitive solution, a solution that was at once luminous and vital. A second feature of exceeding interest is the way in which a profoundly liberal instinct, and a genuine conservative tendency were so balanced in him, as to raise him, in all his deeper teachings, above party. He had unbounded reverence for the past. That reverence, however, was consistent with antagonism to much that we inherit from it. He was conservative in the bent of his mind, and his habitual attitude toward the past; but he was liberal in his revolt from its thralldom, its mannerism, and artificiality. He felt, as few have done, that the conservative instinct of Human Nature keeps it from disintegration and collapse; while its liberal instinct keeps it from stagnation, and leads to forward movements and new developments. The radicalism of his youth came out nowhere so explicitly as in his letter to the Bishop of Landaff, written shortly after he had left the University. The common opinion, however,

is that Wordsworth soon afterwards became a conservative of the most rigid type, and that he remained one to the close of his life. It is true that politically he was a conservative, and his dread of the overthrow of our Institutions produced in him an unreasoning horror of Reform. His dislike to change deepened, with the deepening of his love for our great inheritances, in Church and State. Sara Coleridge writes of a visit he paid to her father at Hampstead in 1834. "How well do I remember Mr Wordsworth, with one leg upon the stair, delaying his ascent, till he had uttered, with an emphasis which seemed to proceed from the very profoundest recesses of his soul, 'I would lay down my *life* for the Church.'"* An anecdote, however, for which I am indebted to Lord Coleridge, shews the other side of the picture, and proves that while in party politics he was conservative, Wordsworth remained liberal in heart to the very end of his life.

The story refers to his later years. The father of the present Chief-Justice, while a judge in the Northern Circuit, spent some time at Ambleside; and calling at Rydal Mount, Wordsworth proposed that he should accompany him on a visit to Lord Lonsdale. He did so. They drove by Kirkston Pass, with the ladies of the household; and after descending at Ullswater the poet proposed that Mr Coleridge and he should leave the carriage, and walk the remainder of the way through the woods to Lowther. Soon after they started on their walk they left the highway, and proceeded across a field by a disused track, towards a blank wall at the opposite side. Seeing there was no gate in view, and no apparent stile to cross, Mr Coleridge asked if they were on the right path. "Yes," said Wordsworth, "you will soon see;" and approaching the loosely built wall, put his foot

* See *Memoir and Letters of Sara Coleridge*, vol. i. p. 107.

against it, and made a breach sufficient to let them pass on their way. Wordsworth then resumed, "There used to be a right-of-way for the people here, time out of mind; but the land has been recently bought by Lord ——, and he has closed this ancient footpath against the people. I am determined, however, to have it kept open, so far as I am able; and I will walk no other way to Lowther. I wouldn't be surprised, now, if we met Lord —— to-night at the Castle, and if so, I shall probably let him know what I think of his action." And so it was. After dinner the new proprietor, who had shut up the footpath, referred at considerable length to the Radicals, who broke down his walls, and entered his grounds without permission. Wordsworth listened for some time, and then rising, said, "Yes, Lord ——, I am the person who broke down your wall, and I shall do it again; for there is an ancient right-of-way through that field, a right of the people, and I am determined to maintain it. You bought your property with that right attached to it, and, Conservative as I am, scratch me thus, and you'll find the Radical underneath."

We may connect with this anecdote, what Wordsworth once said to Henry Crabb Robinson, "I have no respect whatever for the Whigs, but I have a great deal of the Chartist in me."

Wordsworth had a genuine and clear insight into the principles and rights that underlie all change; and though he deprecated innovation, and strangely saw destruction in every departure from established usage, his poetic teaching is no more conservative than it is liberal, because it is both the one and the other, and fits equally well into a new order of things as into the old. It is my strong conviction that what Matthew Arnold so happily called the "healing power" of Wordsworth—his tranquillising and restorative power—may be as profoundly felt by the masses, and by the most

advanced radicals (when they come to know it), as by the most conservative minds amongst us.

My indebtedness to those who have helped me in this Biography is almost too great to be mentioned in detail, and it extends to many who can no longer be thanked in person.

First of all, I must thank the representatives of the Wordsworth family. To the great kindness of the late William Wordsworth, the poet's son—of Willow Bank, Eton, when I first knew him, and afterwards of the Stepping Stones, Ambleside—and of his wife, the late Mrs William Wordsworth, in placing at my disposal the Journals, the MSS. of the Poems, and the Letters, in the rich collection at the Stepping Stones, I owe more than to anything else in the preparation of this Life. To their son, Mr Gordon Wordsworth, I have a similar debt of friendship to acknowledge, for his sending me, and kindly allowing me to publish, so many letters and memoranda regarding his grandfather. From the late Bishop of Lincoln, the nephew and biographer of the poet, I learned many things about Wordsworth, and received a generous permission to make free use of the materials he had collected, both those incorporated in the *Memoirs*, and others which he supplied to me. To the Bishop of St Andrews my thanks are also due for much information regarding his uncle.

By the late Dr Cradock, the Principal of Brasenose College, Oxford, I was informed of many facts, and directed to several sources of information. During walks and visits with him in the Lake Country, I learned more of the local allusions which the poems contain than from any one else. To Miss Quillinan at Loughrigg Holme, to Miss Arnold at Foxhowe, and to the late Matthew Arnold I acknowledge obligations manifold. Miss Quillinan supplied me with the

original MS. of the Fenwick notes to the poems, and with other memoranda. The late Lady Richardson of Lancrigg gave me many personal reminiscences of the poet, and Mrs Stanger of Fieldside, Keswick, has done the same. To Sir George and Lady Beaumont of Coleorton, Leicestershire, I am indebted for access to all the letters from Wordsworth, his wife and sister, to their ancestors—the Beaumonts with whose names those of Coleridge, Southey, Scott, and many others as well as the Wordsworths, are associated. Mention should also be made of the kindness of the Rev. W. Beaumont, at the Rectory, Coleorton. To Mr Ernest Coleridge—to whose biography of S. T. C. the lovers of English Literature are looking forward with rare expectancy—I am deeply grateful for permission to use the letters of his grandfather to Wordsworth;* to the late Rev. Cuthbert Southey for liberty to make use of any letters of his father that it might seem desirable to publish; to the Hon. Mrs Maxwell Scott for a similar permission to examine and use the unpublished letters of Wordsworth to Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford; and to Mrs Sandford, Chester, and the Bishop of Gibraltar for the use of those written to Thomas Poole of Nether Stowey.

To Mr Locker-Lampson I am obliged for permission to copy his large collection of one hundred and thirty-six letters by Wordsworth to Mr Moxon. I have further to express my cordial thanks for access to the still larger store of letters now at Lowther Castle, addressed by Wordsworth to the late Lord Lonsdale, and to Viscount Lowther. Mr Morrison of Fonthill has also allowed me to copy several in his remarkable collection of autographs.

To Lord Coleridge I am indebted for letters from Wordsworth to his father, Mr Justice Coleridge, for access to the

* Many of Wordsworth's letters will appear for the first time in the forthcoming Biography of Coleridge.

most valuable copy of the 1836 edition of Wordsworth's poems which exists—it being full of annotations, corrections, and various readings, made by the poet's own hand—for some unpublished fragments of verse, and for much general information; to the Rev. Thomas Hutchinson, Kimbolton (Mrs Wordsworth's nephew), for MSS., letters, and poems both by Wordsworth and his sister; and to him, and to Miss Hutchinson, West Malvern, for many facts regarding the Wordsworth family; to the Rev. Mr Hill of Warwick, son-in-law of Southey, for some anecdotes of the poet; to Mr Aubrey de Vere, for information on many points, and for free permission to use his papers on Wordsworth; to Mr Henry Reed, Philadelphia, for copies of all of Wordsworth's letters to his father, the late Professor Reed, and for details of his father's relations to the poet; to Mr Ellis Yarnall of the same city, for his varied reminiscences of Wordsworth, and memoranda of his visits to the Lake District of England; and to Mr F. C. Yarnall (of Wynndown, Overbrook, Montgomery Co., Pennsylvania), for his valuable paper on Wordsworth's influence in America.

Mr Browning has kindly sent me the poet's letters to his wife, the late Mrs Barrett-Browning, and has given me information in reference to Wordsworth's friend and correspondent, John Kenyon, the cousin to whom Mrs Browning dedicated *Aurora Leigh*. Mr Frederick Hutchins sent me sixteen letters from the poet and his wife and sister, addressed to Kenyon. The late Mrs Proctor, widow of "Barry Cornwall," supplied me with many interesting facts in reference to Wordsworth, his sister, and Basil Montagu. To Mr Gladstone I am indebted for the letters of the poet written to him, and for permission to publish his own letters to Wordsworth, on the subject of copyright, and other matters. All the letters addressed to Wordsworth on the subject of copyright by his numerous correspondents—

such as Talfourd, Lord Mahon, Monkton Milnes, and Mr Gladstone, were sent to me for inspection by their present owner, Mr Nicholson; and, as the subject has more than a passing interest, extracts from them will be found in the third volume.

To Lady Monteagle, and to her sister Mrs Myers, I am specially obliged for access to the large collection of letters which Dorothy Wordsworth wrote in her girlhood to Miss Jane Pollard, afterwards Mrs Marshall; to Miss Field, sister of Mr Barron Field, for sending me the MSS. of her brother's *Critical Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, and permission to use the poet's own notes upon it. The late Sir Henry Taylor sent me letters about Wordsworth, and Lady Taylor has given me permission to print others from Wordsworth to him, and his own notes and observations on his friend. My thanks are also due to Mrs Alexander Carlyle for the use of her uncle's reminiscences of the poet, and for some addenda to those previously published by Mr Froude; to Miss Stuart, daughter of the editor of the London *Courier*, one of the poet's early friends, for the use of letters which Wordsworth addressed to her father; to Mr J. T. Brown, for many which he wrote to John Scott of *The Champion* newspaper; to Mr Sketchley, librarian of the Forster and Dyce collection at South Kensington, for Wordsworth's letters to Walter Savage Landor, and others; to Mr Maunde Thomson, and to Mr Garnett, of the British Museum, both for access to MSS. and for information; and to Mr Scharf, the Director and Secretary of the National Portrait Gallery at South Kensington. The late Miss Gillies, the artist whose portraits of Wordsworth are referred to frequently, also supplied me with some anecdotes and letters, and information as to her cousin, who was a correspondent of Wordsworth's. Mrs Drummond of Fredley near Dorking, who, as Miss Kinnaird, was a great friend of

Dora Wordsworth, the poet's daughter, has shown me several letters, and given me many delightfully vivid accounts of her early intercourse with the family. Mr Richard Sharp, Wordsworth's early friend, was Mrs Drummond's guardian in youth.

To those who have allowed me to make extracts from their published works, my thanks are also specially due; to Mr Percival Graves for his generosity in reference to Wordsworth's letters to Sir W. Rowan Hamilton and his sister, to Mr Alaric Watts, to Mr Wiffen, to the representatives of Miss Caroline Fox, and to many others. The late Lady Richardson was equally kind with reference to her *Autobiography of Mrs Fletcher*.

I have already referred to the permission of the trustees of the Williams Library, to examine the extensive volumes of Henry Crabb Robinson's MSS. at Grafton Street. Much had been previously extracted by Dr Sadler, both from the *Diary* and the *Reminiscences*, but I found additional material of exceeding interest, and of real importance, bearing more especially upon the cloud which for a time darkened the old and bright relationship of Wordsworth to Coleridge; and I have to thank Dr Sadler more particularly, for his generosity in permitting me to examine those documents, after his own great labour on the same papers was ended. With the late Principal Shairp I often discussed the subject of this Life, in which he took the liveliest interest. He was one of the "best knowers" of Wordsworth (to use Charles Lamb's phrase) in this generation; and it is a satisfaction to myself that the plan we often talked of, of writing the Life, by giving facts and letting criticism alone, approved itself to him.

To many living writers and critics I have been greatly indebted; to Professor Dowden of Dublin, with whom, from first to last, I have had much correspondence bearing

on Wordsworth; to Mr Rawnsley of Crosthwaite Vicarage, Keswick, to whose knowledge, and divining tact, and endless enthusiasm, and appreciation tempered by judgment, I owe much; to the Hon. Roden Noel, for his papers and letters, and conversation; to Canon Ainger, for what he has suggested, and what he has found out for me in various ways, by his wide acquaintance with the literary period, and its prominent writers; to Professor Rowley of University College, Bristol, for facts relating to the Somersetshire period; to the Rev. W. L. Nichols of Woodlands, Bridgewater, for information about the Quantocks and Wordsworth's life at Alfoxden; to the Rev. W. Heard of Westminster, for suggestions bearing more especially upon the *Prelude* and *Excursion*; to Mr Herbert Rix, Secretary to the Royal Society, for his papers and local notes on the Duddon; and, above all, to Mr J. Dykes Campbell, for obligations indefinitely great, especially in the way of information and suggestion as to Coleridge, and Wordsworth's relation to him. In reference to many points about Coleridge, Mr Dykes Campbell is probably the chief living authority. He has been kind enough to revise the proof sheets of part of these three volumes. Had the first volume passed under his critical eye before it was printed off, it would have been more accurate than it is. In the same connection I must thank Mr Archibald Constable, Edinburgh.

I have to explain that owing to the way in which these volumes have been prepared, and sent to press, I have been compelled to insert at the close of the second of them what would have found a more appropriate place in the body of the third volume, or at its close. These appendices—which have been placed where they are with a view to equalise the size of the three volumes—do not, however, belong to the connected story of Wordsworth's life, and may be examined after the third volume is read.

The portrait prefixed to the first volume is taken from the picture by Haydon, which gave rise to Mrs Browning's sonnet, beginning—

Wordsworth upon Helvellyn !

and ending—

This is the poet and his poetry.

It was engraved by Lupton, but by him completely idealized. Lupton's engraving has been often reproduced, but while it is an impressive portrait, it is utterly unlike the original. The original is in the possession of Mr Cornelius Nicolson, Isle of Wight, who kindly sent it down to Edinburgh to be etched for this work. For information regarding it, I refer to the fifth appendix to the second volume. It was the original, and not Lupton's mezzotint, that suggested Mrs Browning's noble sonnet.

I may add that the quotation from Hazlitt (pp. 149-152) was taken from Barron Field's MS., and that the text differs in some particulars from the printed version of Hazlitt's remarks ; also, that Miss Meteyard's conjecture (p. 187), as to Wordsworth and Coleridge having received a subsidy from the Wedgwoods, when they visited Germany in 1798, is probably quite erroneous. The transactions between them during that winter were, in all likelihood, merely banking ones ; and there is no evidence to show that the Wedgwoods defrayed the cost of Coleridge's residence in Germany, over and above the annuity which they paid him regularly.

WILLIAM KNIGHT.

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LIFE OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

WORDSWORTH'S life was given to the world in his Poems. His biography may be said to have been written when the Fenwick notes to the 1856 edition of his works were published, much more truly than that the lives of Shakespeare, or Milton, or any of his predecessors, were written in their works. And some who appreciate him much, would prefer that nothing more should be said about him, that he should remain, if possible, *nominis umbra*, or, to use his own happy phrase, but "a wandering voice."

Nevertheless, the present generation desires—and posterity will probably desire much more—to know all it can regarding one whose function in the great hierarchy of genius is so distinctive and unique. His supremacy has been slowly but securely won, by the simple process of the survival of the fittest to live. By the sure verdict of time—despite the judgment of contemporary reviewers—the trivial is set aside, and only what is great remains; and Wordsworth now ranks, in his own sphere, as one of the chief teachers of the modern world.

The slender story of his life has been told, with more or less of accuracy, a score of times; and there would be no justification in re-stating it, unless some things had to be added that were previously unknown. Words-

worth himself wished that there should be no extended record of his life, and some of his friends, who have given us their own admirable autobiographies (such as Sir Henry Taylor), have thought that the matter might be left as Wordsworth indicated. Sir Henry has said that the path of a great man to posterity runs the risk of being *blocked* by the very accumulation of materials that go to form his biography. Our greatest men are not, however, the best judges of what posterity may wish to know in regard to themselves; and, as time goes on, almost in exact proportion to the debt we owe to those who have had the chief influence over us, we desire to find out all that is ascertainable regarding them—to learn *the authentic story of their lives*, fiction and inaccuracy being weeded out, irrelevancy set aside, and all trivial gossip buried in oblivion.

There is one advantage in postponing the work of writing the life of a great man for some time after his death, viz, that the estimates of his contemporaries sink—or rise—by slow degrees to their proper level; and it is almost impossible for any contemporary adequately to appraise the work of an original genius. In this respect, Ben Jonson's appreciation of Shakespeare, and Coleridge's estimate of Wordsworth, are instances of far-reaching critical insight. In reference to the great teachers of the world, however, does it really matter what judgment their contemporaries passed, provided we have a full and accurate knowledge of the 'manner of men' these teachers were, and of how they lived? I do not disparage criticism in its own place. Its function is great, and it rightly thrusts aside what does not deserve to live; but it is the fate of by far the larger part of contemporary criticism to be superseded in the next generation, while it is notorious that the reviews which carried most authority in their day, have in many instances been absolutely *reversed* by the judgment of posterity. When we

see how the *ex cathedra* verdicts of Johnson, Jeffrey, and Macaulay have been set aside by the calmer insight of the future, we learn that literary estimates are as uncertain as political prophecy. The really important point is to hand down, before it is too late, a full and unbiassed picture of the life and character of our chief teachers, of what they were, and what they did—a plain unvarnished tale, concealing nothing that is essential, and revealing nothing that is unnecessary.

My aim, therefore, has been to make these volumes authentic, full, impartial, adequate; and to let Wordsworth and his Sister for the most part speak for themselves—he in his poems, and especially in his autobiographical one, she in her journals, and both in their letters. No doubt the Poems teach, and will continue to teach mankind, independently of any record of Wordsworth's life; but, on the other hand, many will appreciate his works all the more because of what they come to know of the man who wrote them.

Coleridge has spoken wisely and well* of the "cravings of worthless curiosity," in reference to the lives of great men, as distinguished from "the thirst after useful knowledge;" and Tennyson has said, in lines that deserve republication,† that

"Now the poet cannot die,
Nor leave his music as of old,
But round him, ere he scarce be cold,
Begin the scandal and the cry.

"Ah! shameless! for he did but sing
A song that pleased us for its worth;
No public life was his on earth,
No blazoned statesman he, nor king.

* See *The Friend*, vol. ii., No. 21.

† It is to be hoped that he will not consider *this* republication an instance of the very evil he condemns.

"He gave the people of his best,
His worst he kept, his best he gave,
My curse upon the clown and knave
Who will not let his ashes rest."

All this is true; and the publication of unnecessary detail in reference to the lives of great men is a scandal, and a crime against human nature; but, in proportion as this is understood and acted upon, our legitimate curiosity in reference to their lives and deeds is invariably whetted.

It is of course no more possible, in the biography of a poet, to state the circumstances under which all his poems were composed,* than it is to estimate the place which each poem holds in literature; and no biographer can unfold the full story of a life, and least of all of a literary life. To do so, he would require to estimate the antecedent influences which shaped it into form, and that would involve digression at every turn. To be exhaustive in this way is impossible, and would be very undesirable. It is even possible that "critical reviews," as they are called, are, on the whole, misleading. Even a running biographical commentary, placed alongside of the biographical facts, is apt—with all its value, and all its charm, when deftly made—to distract the mind of the reader from the subject of the biography, and to put before him a possibly transient judgment, in place of what he ought to know, viz., the permanent work of the poet. In these volumes, therefore, I shall for the most part give the facts, and leave commentary alone.

It must also be remembered that we already possess much and very valuable criticism on Wordsworth. Scores of books, and many scores of magazine articles have been written, some of them so excellent that a new

* The task has been attempted, so far, in the notes to this edition of his works.

writer may well pause before presuming to add another stone to the monumental cairn. The critical estimates by Coleridge and his daughter Sara, by Lamb, Southey, Scott, De Quincey, Landor, Wilson, and Hazlitt amongst contemporaries, by Henry Taylor, Clough, Shairp, Arnold, Stopford Brooke, Aubrey De Vere, Leslie Stephen, Hutton, Henry Reid, Mason, F. Myers, and Hudson amongst more recent writers,—in addition to what has been issued in the "Transactions of the Wordsworth Society,"—form a mass of literary judgment by competent minds from opposite points of view, and may well disincline any novice from the task of additional criticism. It is true that, in the preface to the first volume of this edition of the poems, I was rash enough to promise a "critical essay" on the poet; and I have the substance of such an essay almost ready for publication, but materials far more valuable for an estimate of the poet's life have accumulated so much that I feel bound to postpone the essay still. My present function is a much humbler one, viz., to tie together with a slender biographic thread the narrative of the lives of Wordsworth and his sister, and of those who were inseparably connected with them in poetic labour, in such a way that nothing of importance is omitted from it, and thus to arrange the materials on which future critics may work.

A second difficulty I have had to encounter is that many of the most important facts in reference to Wordsworth are already before the world. These I cannot merely repeat, and yet to omit all mention of them would seriously mar the picture of the man. A new biographer is in this dilemma. If he includes all things worth mentioning that happen to be already recorded, readers may say, 'We have heard of this before.' If he omits them, and merely refers to the sources where they may be found, other readers will ask, 'Why have we not the full biography before us now?' Since, however, many of the notes to the

poems in the previous volumes of this edition are biographical—especially the notes to *The Prelude*—I have, at times, merely referred to what will be found by turning up these volumes.

The mention of *The Prelude* recalls the fact that no poet, and scarcely any other literary man, has given so remarkable a disclosure of his own character and personality,—of the very springs of his life, and of the influences that moulded him,—as Wordsworth has done. That autobiography stands quite alone amongst the lives of poets, as Descartes' treatise *On Method* stands alone amongst the lives of philosophers, and perhaps the *Confessions* of St Augustine amongst those of divines. I believe it will be increasingly appreciated with the lapse of time. It is singularly graphic and rich in detail, and for this reason frequent reference must be made to it in the chapters on Hawkshead and on France. The delineation of character is so vivid, so stereoscopic, that even in the most prosaic passages one forgets the medium through which it is presented, in the light of the disclosure itself.

The Fenwick notes, too, are full of biographic incident. It was a happy thought of Miss Fenwick to get the aged poet to dictate these memoranda to her. Some have said that his memory was not to be trusted at the age of seventy-five; but the few inaccuracies which they contain are the merest trifles; and the notes are not more garrulous or gossipy than every one wishes an old man of genius, a poet and a teacher, to be. The marvel is, that they are so full of minute detail, and yet so very accurate. How many men can recall even ten years of their life, and give an accurate report of it? And then—how little is there usually worth recording!

As to the *Memoirs* of Wordsworth by his nephew, the late Bishop of Lincoln, it has been a fashion in some quarters to despise that book, either as heterogeneous, or as too eulogistic, or again as too diffuse. I cannot agree with the

censure it has received. It may be, in some respects, a dull book; but, written as it was in the summer after the poet died, necessarily in haste, and without many of the detailed facts which we now possess, it is a remarkable book; and, with the exception of the Grasmere Journals and the letters of Wordsworth and of his sister not then known, it remains the chief quarry whence the materials for any subsequent life of the poet must be obtained. In every respect it is absolutely indispensable to the student of Wordsworth. With all their desultoriness, it is to these *Memoirs* that we must go back, amid the miscellaneous mass of opinion, &c., for *facts*, elsewhere undiscoverable; and, although I think that something has to be added to them, in order to a full and adequate knowledge of the poet as he was, it is more than a mistake to disparage these volumes. Posterity will find this out.

It has often been said, and sometimes given as a reason against rewriting the life of Wordsworth, that there were no *remarkable incidents* in his life, and that, therefore, it had no great public interest. Others are of opinion that no lives are so interesting as those of literary men of the highest order, of men who—not only by their thoughts, but the way in which these thoughts have been unfolded and embodied—have become the teachers of their own and of subsequent generations. It is of great interest, doubtless, to follow the career of a great statesman or an administrator, of the leader of a party, the discoverer of a hidden law of nature, or the inventor of some new contrivance for the benefit of mankind; but the more silent lives of those who have enriched the world by the legacy of great thoughts, and who by opening up new channels of emotion, and quickening aspiration, have added to the sources of our joy, are quite as worthy of record, and quite as interesting to the race. It is not the lives that have been most crowded with incident or adventure that have necessarily the most to teach.

CHAPTER II.

COCKERMOUTH.

THE ancestry of the Wordsworths may be traced back to the fourteenth century. In the reign of Edward III. a Wordsworth family had settled at Penistone, in the south of the county of York, not far from Sheffield. "It is scarcely possible," says the author of the *Genealogical Memoranda of the Family*, "to refer to any deed of the period between the latter half of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, which related to property or to ecclesiastical or civil matters in the parish of Penistone, without coming across the name of some member of the family of Wordsworth, either as principal or witness. The name was variously spelt—Wurdesworth, Wadysworth, Wadesworth, Wadisworth, Wordesworth, Wordisworth, Wordysworth, Wadsworth, Wordsworthe, Wodesworth, and Wordsworth. Some members of the family at the present time spell the name Wadsworth, and others Wordsworth. . . . The earliest deed in which the name occurs is dated 1392, when one Nicholas Wordesworth appears as one of the witnesses to the same."*

In the reign of Henry VIII. a William Wordsworth of Penistone hit upon a novel but effective plan of recording his pedigree, by carving the names of four generations of his

* *Genealogical Memoranda of the Family of Wordsworth*, by Edwin Jackson Bedford, privately printed, 1851. Compare Hunter's *History of the Deanery of Doncaster*, and Percy's Note to "The Dragon of Wantley" in his *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, vol. iii., p. 296.

ancestors on an oaken chest, or (as he called it in his will) "a greate arke." This ancestral aumery, made in the year 1525, was brought from Penistone in the poet's lifetime, and used to stand in the dining-room of Rydal Mount. It is now in the possession of Mrs William Wordsworth, the poet's daughter-in-law, at the Stepping Stones, Ambleside.* The following is the inscription on it:—

"Hoc op. fiebat A° D'ni M°CCCC°XXV° ex su'ptu Will'mi Wordesworth, filii W., fil. Joh., fil. W., fil. Nich., viri Elizabeth filia et hered. W. Proctor de Peniston q'ru ani'abus p'picietur De." †

From the copious records of the family, collected by the industry of Mr Bedford, little need be extracted here. There was a William Wordsworth, vicar of Penistone, in 1458; another William Wordsworth had an inscription in his memory carved on the woodwork of a seat in Penistone Church, "Orate pro animabus Willmi Wordesworth et Johanna uxoris, ac pro animâ Willmi Benson, qui hanc capellum fieri fecerunt in honorem sancti Erasmi et sancti Axthonii A° D'ni M°D°XXV." ‡ In the Churchwarden's Minute Book in Penistone Church, a donation is recorded, about the year 1640, by a Wordsworth of Water Hall, "yearly for ever to be dealt to six of the most needful poore within Penistone, on St Thomas' day." In 1731, a Josias Wordsworth (who had gone to London, and was of the parish of St Dunstan's in the east) entered in his will, "I

* It is mentioned in the Publication of the *Surtees Society*, vol. iv., and is described in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1850.

† The Nicholas Wordsworth mentioned in this inscription was probably the Nicholas who witnessed the deed of 1392. "From whatever place he came, he seems to have been the common ancestor of numerous families of the name settled in Penistone and the part adjacent, most of whom possessed lands, and some of whom were families of consideration." (Letter from Rev. Joseph Hunter to Wordsworth, Oct. 1831. See *Memoirs*, ii., p. 513.)

‡ See Hunter's *South Yorkshire*, vol. ii., p. 342.

give to Penistone, in Yorkshire, for teaching poor girls to read and write, two hundred Pounds."

Mr Hunter sent to the poet, in the year 1827, a detailed genealogical record of six branches of the Wordsworth family tree, adding that he believed the poet had sprung from the second branch, which settled at Falthwaite, near Stainborough, in the middle of the seventeenth century, and removed to Sockbridge, close to Penrith, in Westmoreland, in the eighteenth.

Early in the eighteenth century Richard Wordsworth, the poet's grandfather, in consequence of unfortunate speculations in coal mines, sold his Falthwaite property, and became superintendent of the estates of the Lowthers of Lowther. When he married he bought the estate of Sockbridge, in the parish of Barton. At the time of the Rebellion of 1745, he was the receiver-general of the county. An extract from a letter of his great-grandson, Captain Charles Robinson, R.N., to the late Bishop of Lincoln, may here be given, from its allusion to an incident in the '45. "Sockbridge was not far from the public road, and not wishing that the public money would fall into the hands of the rebels, he, both upon their advance and retreat, retired, attended by a trusty servant, with his money bags into some glen about Paterdale, leaving his wife in charge of the house, who was accustomed to prepare a plentiful table upon these occasions, thinking that a good repast was the surest way to secure good treatment from them. I may add that the house at Sockbridge was built by a yeoman, who is supposed to have found some treasure left upon the retreat of the rebels in the previous rebellion of 1715. At his death it was bought by our great-grandfather. He (Richard Wordsworth) died *circa* 1762, and was buried in Barton Church." *

* See *Memoirs of Wordsworth*, vol. ii., p. 523.

This Richard Wordsworth's second son, John, born at Sockbridge in 1741, became an attorney at Cockermouth. In 1766 he married Anne Cookson of Penrith. They were the father and mother of the poet.

John Wordsworth was a man of great force of character, and real business capacity. An old clerk of his father's, John Robinson of Appleby, had been appointed, in 1746, as principal law agent and land steward to Sir James Lowther, and was afterwards mayor of Appleby, and member of parliament for Westmoreland. In 1766 a difference arose between Sir James Lowther and Robinson on the American question and Lord North's policy; Robinson resigned his agency, which Sir James at once conferred on John Wordsworth. He lived in the town of Cockermouth, a respected local solicitor. The present agent of Lord Lonsdale writes: "From the books of the Court I find that John Wordsworth was steward of the manor and forest of Ennerdale from 1766 to 1786." He was cut off suddenly at the comparatively early age of forty-two, by an attack of inflammation of the lungs, caught by exposure on the heights of Coldfell, where he had spent the night, having lost his way in returning from Broughton-in-Furness to Cockermouth.

Of the poet's mother, Anne Cookson, we know little. She was born at Penrith in January 1747, was married at the age of nineteen in February 1766, and died in March 1778, being only thirty-one years of age,* and predeceasing her husband by nearly six years.

Four of the children of John and Anne Wordsworth of Cockermouth were distinguished in after life; two of them were illustrious. Their family consisted of Richard Wordsworth, born May 19, 1768, died May 19, 1816; William Wordsworth, born April 7, 1770, died April 23, 1850;

* Details in reference to the poet's maternal grandmother will be found in his own autobiographical memoranda, p. 12.

Dorothy Wordsworth, born Christmas Day 1771, died January 25, 1855; John Wordsworth, born December 4, 1772, drowned February 5, 1805; Christopher Wordsworth, born June 9, 1774, died February 2, 1846. To one of the brothers of the poet, and to their "sole sister," frequent reference will be made in the pages that follow.

In November 1847 Wordsworth dictated certain "autobiographical memoranda" to his nephew, the late Bishop of Lincoln. These have now a significance that warrants their reproduction in full. They were composed at the age of seventy-seven, and revert (as was natural) to the early days at Cockermouth, Hawkshead, and Cambridge more than to the later years at Rydal. It is curious that there is scarcely a reference to anything that occurred after the poet's marriage in 1802. The cursory allusions in them to facts which call for further elucidation as we proceed, (and the restatement of a few already mentioned), will not make the insertion of Wordsworth's own memoranda unnecessary, or unwelcome.

Autobiographical Memoranda dictated by William Wordsworth, P.L., at Rydal Mount, November 1847.

"I was born at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, on April 7th, 1770, the second son of John Wordsworth, attorney-at-law, as lawyers of this class were then called, and law-agent to Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale. My mother was Anne, only daughter of William Cookson, mercer, of Penrith, and of Dorothy, born Crackanthorp, of the ancient family of that name, who from the times of Edward the Third had lived in Newbiggen Hall, Westmoreland. My grandfather was the first of the name of Wordsworth who came into Westmoreland, where he pur-

chased the small estate of Sockbridge. He was descended from a family who had been settled at Peniston in Yorkshire, near the sources of the Don, probably before the Norman Conquest. Their names appear on different occasions in all the transactions, personal and public, connected with that parish; and I possess, through the kindness of Col. Beaumont, an aumery made in 1525, at the expense of a William Wordsworth, as is expressed in a Latin inscription carved upon it, which carries the pedigree of the family back four generations from himself.

"The time of my infancy and early boyhood was passed partly at Cockermouth, and partly with my mother's parents at Penrith, where my mother, in the year 1778, died of a decline, brought on by a cold, the consequence of being put, at a friend's house in London, in what used to be called 'a best bedroom.' My father never recovered his usual cheerfulness of mind after this loss, and died when I was in my fourteenth year, a schoolboy, just returned from Hawkshead, whither I had been sent with my elder brother Richard, in my ninth year.

"I remember my mother only in some few situations, one of which was her pinning a nosegay to my breast when I was going to say the catechism in the church, as was customary before Easter. I remember also telling her on one week day that I had been at church, for our school stood in the churchyard, and we had frequent opportunities of seeing what was going on there. The occasion was, a woman doing penance in the church in a white sheet. My mother commended my having been present, expressing a hope that I should remember the circumstance for the rest of my life. 'But,' said I, 'Mama, they did not give me a penny, as I had been told they would.' 'Oh,' said she, recanting her praises, 'if that was your motive, you were very properly disappointed.'

"My last impression was having a glimpse of her on passing the door of her bedroom during her last illness, when she was reclining in her easy chair. An intimate friend of hers, Miss Hamilton by name, who was used to visit her at Cockermouth, told me that she once said to her, that the only one of her five children about whose future life she was anxious, was William ; and he, she said, would be remarkable either for good or for evil. / The cause of this was, that I was of a stiff, moody, and violent temper ; so much so that I remember going once into the attics of my grandfather's house at Penrith, upon some indignity having been put upon me, with an intention of destroying myself with one of the foils which I knew was kept there. I took the foil in hand, but my heart failed. ¶ Upon another 2 occasion, while I was at my grandfather's house at Penrith, along with my eldest brother, Richard, we were whipping tops together in the large drawing-room, on which the carpet was only laid down upon particular occasions. The walls were hung round with family pictures, and I said to my brother, 'Dare you strike your whip through that old lady's petticoat ?' He replied, 'No, I won't.' 'Then,' said I, 'Here goes ;' and I struck my lash through her hooped petticoat, for which no doubt, though I have forgotten it, I was properly punished. But possibly, from some want of judgment in punishments inflicted, I had become perverse and obstinate in defying chastisement, and rather proud of it than otherwise.

"Of my earliest days at school I have little to say, but 3 that they were very happy ones, chiefly because I was left at liberty, then and in the vacations, to read whatever books I liked. For example, I read all Fielding's works, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and any part of Swift that I liked ; Gulliver's Travels, and the Tale of the Tub, being both much to my taste. I was very much indebted to one of the ushers

of Hawkshead School, by name Shaw, who taught me more of Latin in a fortnight than I had learnt during two preceding years at the School of Cockermouth. Unfortunately for me this excellent master left our school, and went to Stafford, where he taught for many years. // It may be perhaps as well to mention, that the first verses which I wrote were a task imposed by my master; the subject, 'The Summer Vacation;' and of my own accord I added others upon 'Return to School.' There was nothing remarkable in either poem; but I was called upon, among other scholars, to write verses upon the completion of the second centenary from the foundation of the school in 1585, by Archbishop Sandys. // The verses* were much admired, far more than they deserved, for they were but a tame imitation of Pope's versification, and a little in his style. // This exercise, however, put it into my head to compose verses from the impulse of my own mind, and I wrote, while yet a schoolboy, a long poem running upon my own adventures, and the scenery of the country in which I was brought up. The only part of that poem which has been preserved is the conclusion of it, which stands at the beginning of my collected Poems.† //

/" In the month of October, 1787, I was sent to St John's College, Cambridge, of which my uncle, Dr Cookson, had been a fellow. The master, Dr Chevallier, died very soon after; ‡ and, according to the custom of that time, his body, after being placed in the coffin, was removed to the hall of the college, and the pall, spread over the coffin, was stuck over by copies of verses, English or Latin, the composition of the students of St John's. My uncle seemed mortified when, upon inquiry, he learnt that none of these verses

* See vol. i., p. 283.

† See vol. i., l; and vol. vi., 365.

‡ He was succeeded by Dr Craven in 1789.

were from my pen, 'because,' said he, 'it would have been a fair opportunity for distinguishing yourself.' I did not, however, regret that I had been silent on this occasion, as I felt no interest in the deceased person, with whom I had had no intercourse, and whom I had never seen but during his walks in the college grounds. //

“When at school, I, with the other boys of the same standing, was put upon reading the first six books of Euclid, with the exception of the fifth; and also in algebra I learnt simple and quadratic equations; and this was for me unlucky, because I had a full twelvemonth's start of the freshmen of my year, and accordingly got into rather an idle way, reading nothing but classic authors according to my fancy, and Italian poetry. My Italian master was named Isola,* and had been well acquainted with Gray the poet. As I took to these studies with much interest, he was proud of the progress I made. Under his correction I translated the Vision of Mirza, and two or three other papers of the *Spectator*, into Italian. // In the month of August, 1790, I set off for the Continent, in companionship with Robert Jones, a Welshman, a fellow-collegian. We went staff in hand, without knapsacks, and carrying each his needments tied up in a pocket handkerchief, with about twenty pounds a-piece in our pockets. We crossed from Dover, and landed at Calais on the eve of the day when the king was to swear fidelity to the new constitution—an event which was solemnised with due pomp at Calais. On the afternoon of that day we started, and slept at Ardres. For what seemed best to me worth recording in this tour, see the Poem of my own Life.†

* Agostino Isola, an Italian refugee, settled in Cambridge. His granddaughter was adopted by the Lambs, and became Mrs Moxon, the wife of the publisher.

† See *The Prelude*, book vi.

"After taking my degree in January 1791, I went to London, stayed there some time, and then visited my friend Jones, who resided in the Vale of Clwydd, North Wales. Along with him I made a pedestrian tour through North Wales, for which also see the Poem.*

"In the autumn of 1791 I went to Paris, where I stayed some little time, and then went to Orleans, with a view of being out of the way of my own countrymen, that I might learn to speak the language fluently. At Orleans, and Blois, and Paris, on my return, I passed fifteen or sixteen months.† It was a stirring time. The king was dethroned when I was at Blois, and the massacres of September took place when I was at Orleans. But for these matters see also the Poem. I came home before the execution of the king, and passed the subsequent time among my friends in London and elsewhere, till I settled with my only sister at Racedown in Dorsetshire in the year 1796.

"Here we were visited by Mr Coleridge, then residing at Bristol; and for the sake of being near him when he had removed to Nether-Stowey, in Somersetshire, we removed to Alfoxden, three miles from that place. This was a very pleasant and productive time of my life. Coleridge, my sister, and I set off on a tour to Linton and other places in Devonshire; and in order to defray his part of the expense, Coleridge on the same afternoon commenced his poem of the Ancient Mariner, in which I was to have borne my part, and a few verses were written by me, and some assistance given in planning the poem; but our styles agreed so little, that I withdrew from the concern, and he finished it himself.

"In the course of that spring I composed many poems,

* See *The Prelude*, book xiv.

† This is not quite accurate. He left England, November 1791, and returned in December 1792.

most of which were printed at Bristol, in one volume, by my friend Joseph Cottle, along with Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, and two or three other of his pieces.

"In the autumn of 1798, Mr Coleridge, a friend of his Mr Chester, my sister, and I, crossed from Yarmouth to Hamburg, where we remained a few days, and saw, several times, Klopstock the poet. Mr Coleridge and his friend went to Ratzburg, in the north of Germany, and my sister and I preferred going southward; and for the sake of cheapness, and the neighbourhood of the Hartz Mountains, we spent the winter at the old imperial city of Goslar. The winter was perishingly cold—the coldest of this century; and the good people with whom we lodged told me one morning that they expected to find me frozen to death, my little sleeping-room being immediately over an archway. However, neither my sister nor I took any harm.

"We returned to England in the following spring, and went to visit our friends the Hutchinsons at Sockburn-on-Tees, in the county of Durham, with whom we remained till the 19th of December. We then came, on St Thomas's Day, the 21st, to a small cottage at Townend, Grasmere, which, in the course of a tour some months previously with Mr Coleridge, I had been pleased with, and had hired. This we furnished for about a hundred pounds, which sum had come to my sister by a legacy from her uncle Crackanthorp.

"I fell to composition immediately, and published, in 1800, the second volume of the *Lyrical Ballads*.

"In the year 1802 I married Mary Hutchinson, at Brompton, near Scarborough, to which part of the country the family had removed from Sockburn. We had known each other from childhood, and had practised reading and spelling under the same old dame at Penrith, a remarkable personage, who had taught three generations, of the upper

classes principally, of the town of Penrith and its neighbourhood.

"After our marriage we dwelt, together with our sister, at Townend, where three of our children were born. In the spring of 1808 the increase of our family caused us to remove to a larger house, then just built, Allan Bank, in the same vale, where our two younger children were born, and who died at the Rectory, the house we afterwards occupied for two years. They died in 1812, and in 1813 we came to Rydal Mount, where we have since lived with no further sorrow till 1836,* when my sister became a confirmed invalid, and our sister Sarah Hutchinson died. She lived alternately with her brother and with us."

We should like to know more of the poet's mother, but—as is seldom the case with men of marked originality—in his case it was from the father's side that the larger gift descended. It was to the Wordsworths, rather than to the Cooksons or the Crackanthorps, that he owed his inheritance of genius. The allusions to his mother in the poems are very tender. In the Ecclesiastical Sonnets† he recalls her act, already referred to, of pinning a nosegay to his breast when he was going to church to say his catechism before Easter, and mentions her presence there to hear how he said it. It is not one of his best sonnets, but its reference to his mother gives it interest.

"Belovèd Mother! Thou whose happy hand
Had bound the flowers I wore with faithful tie;
Sweet flower, at whose inaudible command
Her countenance, phantom-like, doth reappear;
O lost too early for the frequent tear,
And ill requited by this heartfelt sigh."

More significant are the allusions to her in *The Prelude*. In

* It was in 1835.

† Part iii. 22.

the second book he traces, with subtle power, the blessing of the babe,

“ Who with his soul
Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye,
For him, in one dear Presence, there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
Objects through widest intercourse of sense.”

He speaks of the “poetic spirit of our human life” as due to a maternal inheritance; and he tells us how,

“ By intercourse of touch
He held mute dialogues with his Mother's heart,
Whereby this infant sensibility,
Great birthright of our being, was in him
Augmented and sustained.”

In the fifth book he tells us:—

“ Early died
My honoured Mother, she who was the heart
And hinge of all our learnings and our loves.
Nor would I praise her but in perfect love.”

Nowhere is there a finer or more discriminative description of a mother's influence. He pictures her as fetching her goodness from times past, and as full of trust in the guiding of filial instincts. She had no dread of the future, but lived in the present, without either unnatural fears or unwarrantable hopes,—a serenely placid and a very patient spirit, unselfishly devoted to her children. But, as Mrs Wordsworth died when her son was little more than eight years old, her personal influence in the development of his character was but slight. For a couple of years before her death his education had been carried on partly at Cocker-mouth and partly at Penrith. When at Cocker-mouth the Rev. Mr Eillbanks was his teacher; when at Penrith he lived with the Cooksons, and was taught in a dame's school by Mrs Anne Birkett. Of her he wrote, in 1828, to his friend Hugh James Rose: “The old dame taught us to read,

and practised the memory, often no doubt by rote, but still the faculty was improved."

The chief interest connected with these years, spent by the boy Wordsworth at Penrith school, is the fact that there, at the same time, was another pupil, Mary Hutchinson, a school girl of his own age, his cousin, and afterwards his wife. / Neither at Cockermouth, nor at Penrith, however, did he learn much. The work his father set him to,—viz., the committing to memory large passages of Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser,—was of immeasurably greater use to him than any teaching he received at school. //

The house in which Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth remains very much as it was in his boyhood. It is a somewhat heavy but comfortable two-storied mansion, unpicturesque as it faces the main street of the town; but, viewed from the north side of the river Derwent, it gains in attractiveness. The chief feature connected with it is the terrace-walk at the foot of the garden, with the river below it, whence the tower of the old castle of Cockermouth—"a shattered monument of feudal sway"—can be seen to the east. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth tells us that

"One, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams."

The ceaseless music of the stream composed his thoughts, he says, "to more than infant softness." Even then, while the voice of the Derwent lulled him, he had

"A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves."

He describes the "bright blue river," passing along "the margin of their terrace walk,"

“A tempting playmate, whom we dearly loved.
 Oh ! many a time have I, a five years’ child,
 In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
 Made one long bathing of a summer’s day ;
 Basked in the sun, and plunged, and basked again
 Alternate, all a summer’s day, or scoured
 The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves
 Of yellow ragwort.” //

This “mill-race” may be guessed, and the “sandy fields” are at hand ; but it is in the garden, and on the terrace walk, that we can best realise the “five years’ child,” with his sister Dorothy—not a year his junior—in their favourite playground, visiting the “sparrow’s nest” in the privet hedge, and the clematis bower, with roses intermingled—

“She looked at it and seemed to fear it ;
 Dreading, though wishing to be near it :
 Such heart was in her, being then
 A little Prattler among men.
 The Blessing of my later years
 Was with me when a boy :
 She gave me eyes, she gave me ears ;
 And humble cares, and delicate fears ;
 A heart, the fountain of sweet tears ;
 And love, and thought, and joy.” *

Again he writes, in his fragment *To a Butterfly*, composed in the orchard at Grasmere —

“Oh ! pleasant, pleasant were the days,
 The time, when, in our childish plays,
 My sister Emmeline and I
 Together chased the butterfly !
 A very hunter did I rush
 Upon the prey :—with leaps and springs
 I followed on from brake to bush ;
 But she, God love her ! feared to brush
 The dust from off its wings.” †

Let anyone go down the main street in Cockermouth, and passing Wordsworth’s house to the west, cross the river a few hundred yards lower, by the two-arched Derwent

* Vol. ii. p. 207.

† Vol. ii. p. 254.

Bridge, and walk up by the meads—the “grassy holms”—to the smaller (new) bridge, and he will have a view of the back of the old house, with its terrace-walk at the foot of the garden, very much as Wordsworth would see it in his childhood. The sound of the lapsing river combines with the sight of the shattered castle towers, and the associations of a vanished past, to give a tinge of melancholy to the scene. In 1833 Wordsworth wrote two sonnets on his birth-place: one, *Suggested in sight of the Town of Cockermouth where the Author was born, and his Father's remains are laid*, and the other, *The Address to the Spirit of Cockermouth Castle*.

Though a child, the boy Wordsworth had his occasional expeditions to the country round his birthplace. In the Fenwick note to the sixth of his ‘Evening Voluntaries,’ written in 1833, and entitled *On a High Part of the Coast of Cumberland*, he tells us: “With this coast I have been familiar from my earliest childhood, and remember being struck for the first time by the town and port of Whitehaven, and the white waves breaking against its quays and piers, as the whole came into view from the top of the high ground, down which the road then descended abruptly. My sister, when she first heard the voice of the sea from this point, and beheld the scene before her, burst into tears. Our family then lived at Cockermouth.”

The last sentence makes it clear that the household went down to Whitehaven and St Bees in their childhood. The boys would doubtless wander up Lorton Vale; and, in a very characteristic passage of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth tells us that the mere sight of the windings of a public way, crossing the naked summit of a hill, farther off than he had wandered, and there daily beheld by him as a disappearing and vanishing point, wrought upon his imagination, and,

“Was like an invitation into space
Boundless, or guide into eternity.”

This was the high road to the hamlet of Isel, over the Hay or Watch Hill, about three and a half miles from Cockermouth.

Again in *The Prelude*, we have the record of a ride which the boy took over the hills, when he could scarcely hold a bridle, accompanied by an old servant of his father's. He parted from his guide, dismounted through fear, and led his horse over a rough and stony moor, till he came to a place where in former times a murderer had been hung in chains, and where the letters of his name were still visible, carved in the turf. He fled at once, and describes in memorable words the "visionary dreariness" that invested the moorland waste, and all its accompanying sights.

These are all the incidents he has himself recorded of his childhood, and no other family traditions regarding his early years survive.

CHAPTER III.

HAWKSHEAD : SCHOOL-DAYS.

IN 17⁷88, the boy William Wordsworth—now nine years of age—was sent, with his elder brother Richard, to the grammar-school at Hawkshead, in Lancashire. The younger brothers, John and Christopher, followed to the same school subsequently. This school, one of the oldest and best of its kind in the North of England, was founded by Archbishop Sandys, of York, in the year 1588. His statutes ordained, amongst other things, “that there shall be a perpetual free school, to be called ‘the free grammar school of Edwyne Sandys,’ for teaching grammar and the principles of the Greek tongue, with other sciences necessary to be taught in a grammar school; the same to be taught in the school freely, without taking any stipend, wage, or other exactions from the scholars resorting to the said school for learning; that there shall be a head-master, and an usher; that between the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary and St Michael the Archangel, the school shall begin at six in the morning, or at least half-past six, and continue till eleven, and begin again at one, and continue till five; and that for the remainder of the year it begin at seven, continue till eleven, be resumed at one, and continue till four; during all which time the schoolmaster and usher shall be present.” *

Archbishop Sandys, the pious founder of this school, was a native of the district; and, to his far-seeing wisdom it is due, that for three centuries the boys of the Hawkshead

* Report of *Tercentenary Commemoration of Hawkshead School*, 1885.

village and neighbourhood have had an excellent education free. As many as one hundred scholars have been in attendance at one time. The original constitution of the school remained unaltered till 1832.

The antique simplicity and primitive usages of the Hawkshead village, its seclusion and old-world air, have had something to do with the development of the pupils at its school. The teaching in Wordsworth's time was good, and during the nine years of his residence he had experience of no less than four masters.* For one of them, William Taylor, who taught him for four years (1782 to 1786), he felt the warmest regard. In his *Address to the Scholars of a Village School*, he speaks of him as "our common Friend and Father;" and it was the farewell which this Master took of his pupils on his deathbed (of whom Wordsworth was one) that suggested the *Address*. Other poems, written at Goslar in 1799, — *Mathew*, *The Two April Mornings*, and *The Fountain*—refer to Taylor.†

But far more important than the teaching Wordsworth received at school, was the teaching of the place where he was taught, the influence of his schoolmates, and, above all, the influence of Nature and the country round about Hawkshead. The sense of freedom and equality amongst the boys developed in him the seeds of an almost republican feeling. As compared with Christ's Hospital,—where his friend Coleridge endured the irrational floggings of the headmaster, and the bullyings of his comrades,—at Hawkshead School there was neither tyranny, nor rowdyism. It is probable that this had something to do with the calm tenor of Wordsworth's

* Their names were James Peake, who died in 1781; Edward Christian, master for one year (1781); William Taylor (1782 to 1786); and Thomas Bowman (1786 to 1821).

† He is alluded to in *The Prelude* more than once; and his grave, in Cartmell Churchyard, which Wordsworth visited eight years after his death, is described in the tenth book.

after life, as compared with that of Coleridge. At Hawkshead, the boys boarded in the houses of the village dames, a kindly, simple-hearted race. As will be seen by reference to the notes to *The Prelude*, Wordsworth lived in the cottage of Anne Tyson, whom he has immortalized in that poem.

There it was that, in his ninth year, "the foundations of his mind were laid," by direct and daily intercourse with Nature. Physically robust, full of life and vivacity, in abounding health, ready for every kind of sport which the seasons brought him, and for expeditions far or near in all sorts of weather, living on a very simple frugal even "Sabine fare," his school work over in the early afternoon, and with no evening pressure for "examinations" next day, the boy was free to "range the open heights," to walk round the little lake, and row across it, or saunter in the woods, and listen to their voices. He tells us how he would sometimes "set springes to catch woodcocks," and pursue them through half the autumn night; how with his schoolmates in spring he would climb to high places to harry the raven's nest and when he hung,

by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through mine ear! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds!

He tells us how he would rise stealthily, long before a smoke-wreath was visible in the village, to watch the first gleams of dawn, "alone upon some jutting eminence." Again, he would stroll with a companion round Esthwaite water, the two repeating favourite verses of some poet "with one voice,"—as happy as the birds that carolled around them. He would go angling by lonely brooks on rainy days, and bewildered in

human soul," with "high objects and enduring things;" and this it was that purified in him the very elements of feeling and of thought.

The whole of Wordsworth's subsequent work—as poetic teacher and interpreter of Nature and of human life—arose out of these experiences of his boyhood at Hawkshead. He "loved whate'er he saw," welcomed what Nature gave him, and craved no more. He notes the difficulty, in after life, of going back to our youthful consciousness, and analysing our inheritances—the familiar difficulty of determining what "portion of the river of our minds" came from what fountain. But he believed that, as the child holds a mute unconscious dialogue with its mother's heart, so does the unsophisticated soul of man with Nature,—whether under the quiet stars, or while listening in storm to "notes, that are the ghostly language of the ancient earth." In all this he was mainly, and at first entirely, passive—receiving influence from sources that were inexhaustible; nevertheless, all the while, he says, a "plastic power abode within him," a "local spirit of his own" that was "at war with general tendency." He says that

"An auxiliar light
Came from my mind, which, on the setting sun,
Bestowed new splendour; fountains that run on,
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
Alike dominion, and the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of my eye:
Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,
And hence my transport."

It was not that what he saw in Nature was illusively thrown into it by himself. He half perceived it, and half created it; but he was only able to create, because of the pre-existing harmony between man and Nature. His interpretation was ideal, because it came from within, and necessitated his construing the universal life as quasi-human. And

so he took less interest in the passive "analytic industry" that splits up Nature into sections, and deals with each section apart, than in the active synthetic grasp that combines what seems remote, and detects affinities in "objects where no brotherhood exists to passive minds." Subsequently he traced all the blessings of his after-life,—his contentment with "modest pleasures," the absence of "little enmities and low desires," his continued faith in man and in his destiny,—to this gift received from Nature, from the mountains, the lakes, the cataracts, the mists, and winds, "that dwelt among the hills where he was born."

The passage in which this gift of nature is most definitely and grandly expressed is the following from *The Prelude*:—

"From Nature and her overflowing soul,
I had received so much, that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling; I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
If high the transport, great the joy I felt,
Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
With every form of creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.
One song they sang, and it was audible,
- Most audible then when the fleshly ear,
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed."

One other paragraph from *The Excursion*, unfolding the joy of the growing youth in the presence of Nature amongst the hills of Athole, may be put alongside of this, as it is, without doubt, descriptive of his own life.

"Such was the Boy—but for the growing Youth
 What soul was his, when, from the naked top
 Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
 Rise up, and bathe the world in light ! He looked—
 Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
 And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay
 Beneath him :—Far and wide the clouds were touched,
 And in their silent faces could he read
 Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
 Nor any voice of joy ; his spirit drank
 The spectacle : sensation, soul, and form,
 All melted into him : they swallowed up
 His animal being ; in them did he live,
 And by them did he live ; they were his life.
 In such access of mind, in such high hour
 Of visitation from the living God,
 Thought was not ; in enjoyment it expired.
 No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request ;
 Rapt into still communion that transcends
 The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
 His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
 That made him ; it was blessedness and love ! "

The Hawkshead school is a small two-storied building, and it remains at present very much what it was in the end of last century. The main schoolroom is on the ground floor ; one small chamber above was used by the headmaster, in Wordsworth's time, for the advanced pupils. In another there is a library, formed for the most part by the donations of former pupils. Wordsworth's last teacher, Bowman, established a custom, which lasted for some time, that each scholar should pay five shillings per annum to the library, and on leaving school should present any book or books he chose. It may be interesting to know that, on leaving for Cambridge, Wordsworth and Robert H. Greenwood together presented to the library Gillies's "History of Greece," in four volumes 8vo. In another school custom the boy Wordsworth joined, viz., in carving his name with a penknife on one of the oaken desks. This memorial of his boyhood has been recently protected from injury by a piece

of glass let into the bench, through which the name—W. Wordsworth—may be easily read. Quite lately the following sentences from his poems have been 'drawn on scrolls, and put up around the walls of the chief class-room :—*

"Small service is true service while it lasts."

"The child is father to the man,
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety."

"We live by admiration, hope, and love."

"Books we know
Are a substantial world, both pure and good."

Like the school-house, Anne Tyson's cottage is externally very much as it was, in 1778; and it is little changed in the interior, although its surroundings are much altered. It is a humble dwelling of two storeys. The floor of the basement flat, paved with the blue flags of Coniston slate, is probably just as it was in Wordsworth's time. On the second flat there are two bedrooms to the front, one of which must have been Wordsworth's. The cottage faces south-west, and Wordsworth's room was probably that on the proper left, with the smaller of the two windows. He speaks of it thus :—

"Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwelt,
A ministration of your own was yours ;
Can I forget you, being as you were
So beautiful among the pleasant fields
In which ye stood ? or can I here forget
The plain and seemly countenance with which
Ye dealt out your plain comforts ? Yet had ye
Delights and exultations of your own." †

Again :

"That lowly bed whence I had heard the wind
Roar, and the rain beat hard ; where I so oft
Had lain awake on summer nights to watch
The moon in splendour couched among the leaves

* The suggestion was due to Mr Rawnsley, then Vicar of Wray, now of Crosthwaite, Keswick, and the scrolls are the work of Mrs Rawnsley.

† See *The Prelude*, book i., vol. iii., p. 147.

Of a tall ash, that near our cottage stood ;
Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro
In the dark summit of the waving tree
She rocked with every impulse of the breeze." *

This ash tree is gone, but its locality is not difficult to trace. It grew on the proper right front of the cottage, where an outhouse is now built. Tyson's house has special interest in connection with the "fair seed-time of his soul"; and it is perhaps easier for us to realise the boy Wordsworth at Hawkshead as *it* is now, than it is to imagine the man Wordsworth at Dove Cottage or at Rydal, as *they* now are.

Wordsworth's reference to Anne Tyson, the "old dame, so kind and motherly," her cottage, and the garden, are familiar to every reader of *The Prelude*. Perhaps the most interesting is his allusion to

That unruly child of mountain birth,
The famous brook, who soon as he was boxed
Within our garden, found himself at once,
As if by trick insidious and unkind,
Stripped of his voice and left to dimple down
(Without an effort and without a will)
A channel framed by man's officious care.

There has been doubt, and there still is controversy, as to the identity of this brook. Dr Cradock wrote thus of it; "Persons have visited the cottage without discovering it: and yet it is not forty yards distant, and is still exactly as described. On the opposite side of the lane already referred to, a few steps above the cottage, is a narrow passage through some new stone buildings. On emerging from this, you meet a garden, the farther side of which is bounded by the brook, confined on both sides by large flags, and also covered by flags of the same Coniston formation, through the interstices of which you may see and hear the stream running freely. The upper flags are now used as a footpath, and lead by

* See *The Prelude*, book iv., vol. iii. p. 194.

another passage back into the village. No doubt the garden has been reduced in size by the use of that part of it fronting the lane for building purposes. The stream, before it enters the area of buildings and garden, is open by the lane side, and seemingly comes from the hills to the westward. The large flags are extremely hard and durable, and it is probable that the very flags which paved the channel in Wordsworth's time may be doing the same duty still."

There is another spot a few hundred yards above this one, in the course of the brook, at a place now called Walker Ground, where the streamlet is also "boxed within a garden" and "stripped of its voice" for some distance; and it is said that boys attending the school in the end of the last century used to board there. But it seems more probable that the "garden" with its "crowd of things about its narrow precincts all beloved," was near Dame Tyson's house.

Wordsworth's school holidays were spent either at Penrith, with his mother's family the Cooksons, or at Cockermouth. He gives us a most graphic picture of one holiday at Cockermouth, and of his joy at finding a "golden store" of books in his father's house; how he took out one book—the "Arabian Nights"—with his rod when he went a-fishing; and how, though the soft west wind was ruffling the water to the angler's heart, he lay amid the hot stones of the Derwent, and in the glaring sun, the whole long-live day, devouring these tales of delightful fiction.

When the school holidays were at Penrith, there was to William the great delight of occasional meetings with his sister Dorothy, and doubtless of seeing his old schoolfellow and cousin, Mary Hutchinson. Dorothy's childhood with her relations at Penrith seems to have been an unhappy one, and she poured out her sorrows in frequent letters to her friend Jane Pollard, afterwards Mrs John Marshall of Leeds and Hallsteads. In these letters, which have not been

published,* there are the signs of a deep, strong, affectionate, lonely nature, longing for a fellowship that was denied to it. The Penrith relatives were ungenial people. The grandfather had not the best of tempers, and the grandmother had little affection to spare; cold unsympathetic natures, both of them. Dorothy writes, at the age of sixteen, how bitterly she laments the loss of her parents, (she was an orphan at thirteen). She lived as a stranger in the house, and grew up grave and silent, wearied with the triviality of the work she was set to do, and with the stock topics of conversation in the house. Incessantly lectured as to the duty of sedateness by a very artificial old lady, she took it meekly, but poured out her spirit the more earnestly in these letters to her friend. A subsequent chapter will contain many of them. The following may now be given, as it contains the earliest hint of Wordsworth's thoughts as to a profession in life, and shews that he at first wished to follow his father's. It was written from Penrith in 1787, but is undated:—

"I do not now pass half my time alone. I can bear the ill-nature of all my relations, for the affection of my brothers consoles me in all my griefs; but how soon shall I be deprived of this consolation. They are so affectionate. . . . William and Christopher are very clever. . . . John, who is to be the sailor, has a most affectionate heart. He is not so bright as either William or Christopher, but he has very good common sense. . . . Richard, the eldest, is equally affectionate and good, but he is far from being as clever as William. . . . Many a time have W., J., C., and myself shed tears together, tears of the bitterest sorrow. We all of us feel each day the loss we sustained when we were deprived

* One or two extracts are given in Mr Myers' volume on *Wordsworth*, in the *English Men of Letters* series.

of our parents ; and each day do we receive fresh insults of the most mortifying kind, the insults of servants." [The uncle would not send horses to bring the boys from school after the holidays had begun, but kept them a week at Hawkshead till W. hired a horse and rode over to Penrith. In the Penrith house they had evidently much to endure. "Uncle Kit (who is our guardian) cares little for us. . . . We have been told a thousand of times that we were liars. Mortifications to which we are continually subject. . . . W. has a wish to be a lawyer, if his health will permit."

Another characteristic incident of the Hawkshead days is mentioned in *The Prelude*. Immediately before the Christmas holidays in 1783, and shortly before his father's death, William and his brothers went out from the village to watch for the horses that were to be sent to take them over to Penrith. There was a crag that rose from "the meeting-point of two highways," and overlooked them both. Thither the boy went, "scout-like, and gained the summit," and he watched, on a dark tempestuous day, beside a naked wall and a blasted hawthorn tree, in an anxiety of hope, straining his eyes intensely for the first sight of the horses. Soon after they got to Penrith the father died, and the four orphan boys followed him to his grave at Cockermouth; and then he tells us that the memory of that day of expectation on the crag came back to him. He bowed low in submission, but,

" afterwards, the wind and sleety rain,
And all the business of the elements ;
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
And the bleak music from that old stone wall,
The noise of wind and water, and the mist
That on the line of each of these two roads
Advanced in such indisputable shapes ;
All these were kindred spectacles and sounds,
To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,
As at a fountain."

There is no doubt that, in these joyous Hawkshead days, the continuity of the life of the world, and the reciprocal influence of one object on another—all things being knit together in one vast hierarchy—was realised by Wordsworth. But it must be remembered that his vision of Nature was in one sense the vision of a "*light that never was on sea or land*,"—that the radiance which "bestowed new splendour" on external Nature "came from within;" and, on the other hand, that it also really existed in the objects that surround us, while by the majority of men it is unperceived. We must connect the *Ode on Immortality* with these Hawkshead years, as well as with Cocker-mouth. The hour of the first "splendour in the grass," and "glory in the flower"—which had vanished when he wrote this *Ode* at Grasmere—survived at Hawkshead; but it was being slowly changed, from the mere organic pleasure and delight of the earlier years, to a delight in Nature for what it taught or revealed of Man. When the boy went out to watch the light of dawn from some "jutting eminence" near Hawkshead, he tells us that in these moments

"such a holy calm
Would overspread his soul, that bodily eyes
Were utterly forgotten, and what he saw,
Appeared like something in himself, a dream
A prospect in the mind."

This by degrees ripened still further into

"these obstinate questionings
Of sense, and outward things,
Falling from us, vanishings," &c.,

of which the great *Ode* is the record. The process of idealisation—begun in early childhood—was matured only when he detached himself from Nature, and realised the separateness and the kindredness together.

In all this experience at Hawkshead, however, he was

in a real sense, alone. He had companions, with whom he walked, and rode, and played, but none of them—neither Raincock, “the boy of Windermere,” nor Greenwood, “the minstrel of the troop,” nor Fleming, the companion of his walks round Esthwaite—really understood him.

Of verses written by Wordsworth during his Hawkshead days, we have (perhaps fortunately) no surviving trace, except the extract “From the conclusion of a Poem, composed in anticipation of leaving school,” and the other fragment (of greater promise) entitled, *Written in very early Youth*, and beginning

“Calm is all Nature as a resting wheel.” *

That he did write verses was known to all his schoolfellows; and I am indebted to a nephew of Southey’s, the Rev. Mr Hill of Warwick, for the fact, told him by the poet, that one of his very prosaic schoolfellows at Hawkshead once addressed him thus: “I say, Bill, when you write poems, do you *always* invoke the Muse?” †

* It is worthy of note that this earliest fragment is in irregular sonnet form.

† I may here mention, though out of their chronological place, two other little anecdotes derived from the same source. One of the peasantry near Rydal hearing him often talking aloud and humming over his verses in all weathers out of doors, replied to the question of a stranger: “What sort of a man is Mr Wordsworth?” “Oh, sir, he goes bumbling, and muffling, and talking to his sen; but *whiles* he’s as sensible as you or I!”

Once in the later years of his life (see vol. ii.) Wordsworth met with an accident in driving from Keswick to Ambleside. Just beyond Naddle Bridge, in the vale of St John, the coach from Grasmere to Keswick, through great carelessness on the part of the driver, came into violent collision with Wordsworth’s carriage, and upset it. The vehicle was smashed, but Wordsworth was not injured. In after years the driver seemed rather elated with the honour of having smashed the carriage of so distinguished a man, and used to say to the passengers on descending that hill, “Now here, here’s the place where we spilt the Powet.” My informant asked him, “And what did he say to you?” “Well, sir,” was the reply, “he got up, sir, and shook himself, and said, ‘I intend, sir, I intend to make a thorough investigation into this here business!’”

CHAPTER IV.

CAMBRIDGE: UNIVERSITY LIFE AND SUMMER HOLIDAYS: DOROTHY WORDSWORTH AT FORNCETT.

IN October 1787 Wordsworth went up from Westmoreland to Cambridge by York (where he spent four days), and began life as an undergraduate at John's College. In *The Prelude* he has described his first view of Cambridge from the top of the coach, whence he saw "the long-roofed chapel of King's College," its turrets and pinnacles; his alighting at the Hoop Inn; his earliest impression of the streets, the colleges and cloisters; and the strange contrast in it all to what he had been accustomed to amongst the hills of the north. His rooms were in the first of the three courts of St John's, above the college kitchens. The clock of Trinity hung near him, and from the window of his bedroom he could look into the ante-chapel of that college.

He received little influence from the teaching of the college tutors or lecturers. Their prelections were eminently dull, and so he read the poets and the novelists more than the classics, and studied Italian. It will surprise no one that his name did not appear on the list of wranglers. Other boys from Hawkshead school eclipsed him easily in mathematical honours (see vol. ii. p. 38). In fact he was out of his natural element during all the three years at Cambridge. He tells us that he felt

"a strangeness in the mind,
A feeling that I was not for that hour,
Nor for that place."

He would have felt the very same in boyhood had he

been sent to one of the larger English public schools instead of to the primitive simplicities of Hawkshead. At Cambridge he was most at his ease when he left his comrades and the college grounds, and went out to the level fields around the city. There he solaced himself as he "perused the common countenance of earth and sky," or turned inwards upon the mysteries of his own nature. Even in the level flats of the fen country, to "the loose stones that covered the highway" he "gave a moral life." Sensitive to every changing mood of Nature, as the surface of the water to the influence of the sky, all that he beheld, he tells us, "respired with inward meaning." His comrades thought him an eccentric youth, but he had his own world to live in. And so, as an undergraduate, he made few friends. It was a lonely, yet a joyous time. A spell seemed on him when he was alone; and yet he was a social youth, and loved not merely companionship, but mirth. During these Cambridge years he boated in the river, rode into the country, read novels, and went to parties with the rest of his collegians. Once, he tells us, in the college room which had been Milton's, at a wine party, he poured out libations to the memory of the Bard till his brain grew dizzy. He left the room, and rushing out found he was too late for chapel. He adds, what we can well believe, that never before or since had he been excited by wine.

Cambridge, however, did more for Wordsworth than he himself knew. It gave him little scholarship, but it disciplined his character. Instead of the free hand of Nature, the equally powerful hand of the Past was now upon him. It awakened a new, though almost unconscious, reverence for antiquity. He tells us that he

"Could not print
Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps
Of generations of illustrious men,
Unmoved."

The simple fact that Milton and Newton had passed through the gateways, lived in the college, and were familiar with the quadrangles that he knew, stirred him—while it brought these great intellects nearer to him. He sauntered out to the village of Trompington with his Chaucer, and read the "Reve's Tale" under the hawthorns. So, too, with the other Poets. And the months passed on, in a somewhat desultory manner. Imagination slept, the heart reposed, the pulse of contemplation almost failed to beat. It was his own fault, he says; but the free and open Hawkshead life had ill tutored him for the comparative stagnation and the "indoor study" of Cambridge. He regrets, and with good reason, that he did not study harder; but, at the same time, he notes the passions, and academic jealousies, to which hard study and fierce competitions give rise. He tells us that he spent most of the first eight months at Cambridge in studying the characters of the College tutors, men somewhat grotesque in character, bookworms, and humourists of a type now obsolete.

Wordsworth's first summer vacation from Cambridge, in 1788, was memorable to him in many ways. He went back to Westmoreland and Lancashire. Readers of *The Prelude* know well his description of his return to Hawkshead, his meeting with Dame Tyson, his return to his old room in her house, his saluting every familiar person and place—the tall ash tree, the garden, the brook, his old companion dog, his wanderings up the Vale, and round the Lake, to the old haunts of his boyhood. Everything was the same, and yet all was changed. There was now—partly the effect of temporary absence, and partly due to the enlargement of his own nature—a "human-heartedness" about his love for the objects of external nature. Trees, mountains, brooks, even the stars of heaven were now regarded, not with awe, but with a deep and an enthusiastic

human love. He thinks he wasted some time by the pursuit of trivial pleasures during this first summer holiday. He would occasionally join his old companions in a rustic dance: and he records one of these, at a small mountain farm. Every one knows the memorable lines in which he describes his return in the morning to Hawkshead, when in the calm brightness of that new-born day, he "made no vows, but vows were made for him," and he realised that he must henceforward dedicate himself to the office of a Poet solely. The first fruits of this dedication was the *Evening Walk*, which he began to write during this first holiday in the north.*

✓ Before returning to Cambridge, he seems to have gone up to London for a few days, and

"Paced her endless streets
A transient visitant."

He went, apparently, in some travelling cart or showman's waggon,† "with vulgar men about him;" but, as soon as he had passed through the long labyrinth of suburban villages, it was almost as when first he saw the Alps, the "weight of ages" descended upon him, a sense of power in the vast city. He afterwards compared his experience of London to that of the curious traveller, in the grotto of Antiparos or the cave of Yordas, bewildered with the gloom, but gradually realizing the vastness and the many-sided interest of the place.

When he returned to Cambridge, in October 1789, he seems first to have realised that he might be able to leave behind him some work, which "pure hearts would reverence."

Over and over again he expresses his thankfulness that

* Fragmentary passages, written at Hawkshead, were inwoven into the *Evening Walk*, when it was finally prepared for the press in 1793.

† See *Prelude*, book viii., vol. iii. p. 301.

he was not compelled to read, in the formal lines of classical or mathematical scholarship, that he was left as free to range the "happy pastures" of Literature as in boyhood to range the woods and heights at Hawkshead. And it was well for him—although it would be the worst thing possible for the majority of us—that the academic "guides and wardens of our faculties" did not confine him to the work of reading for honours in any tripos. Left very much to himself, the awe of mighty names in past Literature, which had possessed him hitherto, was softened down, and the place of these Teachers of mankind seemed approachable.

All that winter at Cambridge, he tells us, he used to frequent the College grove and walks by night—usually alone—till the porter's bell summoned him to his room at nine. He used to be spell-bound by one particular tree, an ivy-clad ash, which, with its lightsome twigs, and sprays, and seeds, that hung in yellow tassels, fascinated him, especially as seen beneath a frosty moon. This ash tree is now gone. He did not entirely neglect his mathematical studies, and he has written in *The Prelude*, with rare appreciation, of geometric science, "and its high privilege of lasting life." He even felt the charms of mathematical synthesis, to a mind "beset with images, and haunted by itself."

His next summer vacation was even more important to him than that of 1788, for it brought him again into contact with his sister Dorothy and Mary Hutchinson. He went north by Dovedale in Derbyshire, and, by the wilder Yorkshire dales, to Penrith. With his sister he wandered over the whole Penrith district, climbed the Border Beacon, explored the banks of the Emont, and lingered about the towers of Brougham Castle. They would go up the Emont to Sockbridge, the old home of their grandfather, down the same stream past Brougham Castle to the Countess' Pillar, possibly out to the great druidical circle of Long Meg, and

certainly through the woods of Lowther Castle. The poem, which he had begun in his last autumn vacation at Hawkshead, was now continued; and the belief that he must dedicate himself to song, "else sinning greatly"—which came upon him with such vivid force in his morning-walk after the rustic dance a year ago—deepened in the course of these wanderings with his sister and Mary Hutchinson, in that long holiday at Penrith. Its first fruit was the Poem,—which he dedicated to his sister after his return to "Granta's Cloisters" in October 1789,—but did not publish till five years later, in 1793.

His last year at Cambridge—to the majority of studious men a year of intense labour at competitive examinations—was spent by Wordsworth pretty much as the two earlier ones had been.

In his third summer holiday, instead of returning to the north, he started with a friend, a fellow collegian in John's, on a pedestrian tour through France and Switzerland. They had discussed the Alps together, thought over Hannibal's achievements, and wished to see the mountains and the passes; but another impulse moved them. It was a wondrous time in modern European history. France seemed to be "standing on the top of golden hours." A revolution was in the air, and with the *promise* of that revolution both these young spirits were in sympathy. The year before, the Bastille had fallen in Paris, and to many of the youth of England it seemed the dawn of a new era, an era of cosmopolitan freedom. Even in the conservative seats of learning sympathy with the new movement was expressed, as well as felt. The Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge had gone so far as to speak of the destruction of the Bastille as "a subject of triumph and congratulation." Wordsworth's friend was a Welshman, Robert Jones of Plas-y-bon, in Denbighshire, afterwards Fellow of John's College,

and parson in Oxfordshire. They took with them walking-sticks, but no knapsacks, each tying up "in a pocket-handkerchief" what they required for a three months' journey on foot, and "twenty pounds apiece in their pockets." In passing through London, Wordsworth did not tarry to call on his brother Richard (settled in business there), as he thought that their scheme of pedestrian travel would be regarded as "mad and impracticable." On the 13th July 1790 they left Dover for Calais, and were on the Continent till the month of October. They touched the French soil on the very day when King Louis XIV. swore fidelity to the new Constitution imposed on him. Calais was in high festival, and they saw

2. XVI

"How bright a face is worn when joy of one
Is joy for tens of millions."

They cast no regretful thoughts back to England, when everywhere as they wandered, even in sequestered villages along their route, they seemed to see the signs of present joy, and of coming blessedness to the people. There was as yet no evidence that in these "dances of liberty" there was the "pomp of a too credulous day." They avoided Paris, went on to Burgundy; and, at Chalons embarked, and with a crowd of delegates returning from Paris, floated down the Rhone. At night they landed, supped with their fellow-voyagers, danced, and pledged the new republic with glee, resuming their voyage in the morning, till they reached Lyons. Thence they again started on foot, and in two days reached the Convent of Chartreuse. In the first volume of this work will be found part of a long letter from Wordsworth to his sister, written at Keswick on September 6, 1790, giving a detailed account of this journey, which was almost "a marvel of military speed." They went on from the Chartreuse to Villeneuve, thence to Martigny and

to Chamonny, saw the great glaciers under Mont Blanc, its "dumb cataracts and streams of ice," returned to the Rhone valley, went up as far as Brieg, crossed over the Alps by the Simplon, heard at the summit with a pang of regret that the climb was over, and that they must thence descend to Como. Como seems to have impressed Wordsworth more than any other spot during this journey. He gives a minute account of it. They returned by the sources of the Rhine, went by Lucerne and Zurich to Schaffhausen, and after sundry minor excursions, floated down the Rhine to Cologne, and returned by Calais. Wordsworth's long letter to his sister must be referred to, as it cannot be reproduced; and there it will be seen how much his thoughts turned to her while he was abroad, and how intense was his appreciation both of the magnificence of the Swiss scenery, and of the French and the Swiss character.* The two young pedestrians must have presented an odd appearance, and he admits that they raised many a smile in the villages as they passed on, carrying their bundles on their heads!

A first visit to Switzerland usually opens the eye to certain aspects of the sublime in Nature never seen before. It was so with these Cambridge youths, and a poetical record of their travels, entitled *Descriptive Sketches*, was written by Wordsworth, and published in the same year as *The Evening Walk*, 1793. This journey, and all that it brought to Wordsworth, is also recorded, in much nobler verse, in the sixth book of *The Prelude*. There we learn that all he saw, and heard, and felt in that delightful journey, was a stream that flowed parallel to a kindred stream. It flowed

"Confederate with the current of the soul."

Wordsworth was more profoundly moved by the new

* Wordsworth tells us they learned lessons of "genuine brotherhood."

revelations which Nature made to him, in the Alps and in Italy than by the political revolution that was going on, or by the European strife for freedom which was the great question of the hour. Speaking to Coleridge of the "glorious and happy time" of this tour, Wordsworth says, that though they "crossed the Brabant armies in the front, for battle in the cause of Liberty," he looked upon the event "as from a distance." He indeed "heard, and saw, and felt, but with no intimate concern." The glories of the ever-living universe, opening up around him, and calling him to new delights, magnetised him, and he needed nothing more to satisfy him. When he came to write out the *Descriptive Sketches*, and dedicate them to his fellow traveller, the European conflict had touched him more deeply; and he concludes that poem by expressing sympathy with the struggle for Liberty, and a hope for its realisation. The *Sketches*, however, were composed for the most part in the year 1792, while he resided in France, and when his mind had undergone some new developments.

His sister sent to her friend, Miss Pollard, an account of her brother's Swiss tour; and as it may be best to give several of her letters together as illustrative of her life in Norfolk, and of the family movements of the brothers, especially of William, John, and Christopher, we go back to the date of William's leaving the north for Cambridge in 1787. Dorothy was then at Penrith; she went thence to Halifax, and from Halifax to her uncle Cookson's rectory at Fornsett, in Norfolk. Each letter will explain itself.

"PENRITH, Monday Evening, 10 o'clock [1787].

"Yesterday morning I parted with the kindest and the most affectionate of brothers. I cannot paint to you my distress at their departure. For a few hours I was absolutely miserable, as a thousand tormenting fears rushed upon

me; the approaching winter, the ill-nature of my grandfather and Uncle Chris., the little probability there is of my soon again seeing my youngest brother, the still less likelihood of my visiting my Halifax friends, in quick succession filled my mind. . . . You know not how forlorn and dull I find myself now that my brothers are gone, neither can you imagine how I enjoyed their company, when I could contrive to be alone with them. If the partial affection of a sister does not greatly magnify all their merits they are charming boys, particularly the three youngest (William, John, and Kit). . . . I often say to myself I have the most affectionate brothers in the world. While I possess them can I ever be entirely miserable. . . . It is indeed mortifying to my brothers and me that amongst all those who visited at my father's house he had not one real friend. . . . Mr brother William goes to Cambridge in October. He wishes very much to be a lawyer, if his health will permit; but he is troubled with violent headaches. . . .

[She gives a catalogue of the books she had received from her brothers, including the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, Fielding's works, *Gil Blas*, Milton's works, Goldsmith's poems, with the promise of a Shakespeare. She tells her friend she is determined to pursue study in French and English though under difficulties, because she had work to do in the shop at Penrith, and it was only "by working particularly hard for one hour" that she could manage "to read the next without being discovered."]

"I rise pretty early in the morning, so I hope in time to have perused them all. I am at present at the *Iliad*, and like it very much. My brother William read part of it. . . . I wear my hair curled about my face in light curls frizzled at the bottom."

The following extracts, from three undated letters, seem to belong to the year 1787 :—

"I have heard from my brother William since his arrival at Cambridge. He spent three or four days at York on the road." "John will very likely be off to India in spring."

[The next letter is one of ardent passionate friendship, written just after her grandfather's death, thankful that he was gone], "for he has for these two years been a burden to himself and friends." [Expresses a longing to go to Halifax to see her friend], "that dear place which I shall ever consider as my home. . . . "We have no father to protect, no mother to guide us." . . . "My brother John has set sail for Barbadoes. . . . I hope, poor lad, that he will be successful and happy. He is much delighted with the profession he has chosen. How we are squandered abroad!" [Then she goes on to wish her correspondent were her sister], "how happy we should be! Our fortunes would be very small, but sufficient for us to live comfortably, and on our brothers we would depend for everything."

December 7th.—"Could I but see you. I really think that for an hour after our meeting there would nothing pass betwixt us but tears of joy, fits of laughter, and unconnected exclamations. . . . I assure you I am a very skilful architect. I have so many different plans of building our castle, so many contrivances! Do you ever build castles? . . . It is a very fine morning, most likely you are taking a walk up the bank. As for me, I never go out but on a Sunday."

The next extract is from a letter, dated "Norwich, December 6, 1788."

"NORWICH, *December 6, 1788?*

[She praises her Uncle and Aunt Cookson. When it was told her that she was to go with them to Fornsett, she was] "almost mad with joy. . . . After the wedding was over" [presumably the Cookson's wedding], "we set off on our

journey to Newcastle, and spent a fortnight there." [Thence to Cambridge, where she saw her brothers], "very well, and in excellent spirits." [Stayed only a day in Cambridge, thence to Norwich, and thence next day to Forncett.] "Forncett is a little village, entirely inhabited by farmers, who seem a very decent kind of people. My uncle's house is very comfortable, and the gardens will be charming. I intend to be a great gardener, and to take care of the poultry, which we have in great abundance."

In the beginning of the following year, January 25, 1789, she writes:—

"January 25th, 1789.

"My brother John, I imagine, sailed for India on Saturday or Sunday in the *Earl of Abergavenny*. William is at Cambridge, Richard at London, and Kit at Hawkshead. How we are squandered abroad. . . . I have got a little school. . . . I have only kept it six months. I have nine scholars. . . . Our hours in winter are, on Sunday mornings, from nine till church time; at noon from half-past one to three; and at night from four till half-past five. Those who live near us come to me every Wednesday and Saturday evening. I only instruct them in reading and spelling. . . . I have one very bright scholar, some very tolerable, and one or two very bad. I intend in a little time to have a school on a more extensive plan. Mr Wilberforce has been with us for rather more than a month. He allows me two guineas a year to distribute in what manner I think best for the poor."

"Sunday, December 28th, 1789.

. . . "We are happily situated at Forncett, and upon a near view my prospects appear even more delightful than upon a more distant one. On Christmas day we went in the morning to one of my uncle's churches, which is only a

step or two from the house, and in the afternoon to the other, which is about a mile from us." [Speaks of the "only neighbour within two miles," a Miss Dix, a rich maiden lady, and of her visits to her, of her merits, and of her censoriousness; also of meetings with Dr Enfield of Norwich; of "*rowts*, which are of all things in the world the most disagreeable."] . . . "Did I ever tell you that my brother John is gone to Jamaica, and on his return is going to the West Indies. One of my amusements is feeding the robin red-breasts. There are at present two in the room, which are gone to rest. You may imagine how tame they are, when I tell you that they hop about the room where we sit, without the least appearance of fear."

"FORNCETT, *April 30th*, 1790.

. . . "My brothers, I hope, are all well. I long to have an opportunity of introducing you to my dear William. I am very anxious about him just now, as he will shortly have to provide for himself. Next year he takes his degree. When he will go into Orders I do not know, nor how he will employ himself. He must, when he is three-and-twenty, either go into Orders or take pupils. He will be twenty in April. I do not know whether I mentioned my brother Kit to you. He intends to go to Cambridge. My uncle tells me he is a most amiable youth; and I am told that, for his years, he is a most excellent scholar; and from my own experience I know that he has the best of tempers."

"FORNCETT, *October 6th*, 1790.

"If you have been informed that I have had so dear a friend as my brother William traversing (on foot, with only one companion) the mountains of Switzerland during the whole of this summer, and that he has not yet returned, I

flatter myself you will be anxious on my account to hear of his welfare. I received a very long letter from him a week ago, which was begun upon the Lake of Constance." [She gives a long account of the letter.] . . . "William is a perfect enthusiast in his admiration of nature in all her various forms." [She quotes from the letter in detail as printed in the *Memoirs*.] "I once saw the Miss Martineau you mention at Norwich. Mr and Mrs Martineau, her brother and sister, we are very well acquainted with. Last summer we spent two or three days at their house, and had an invitation from them this summer to the musical festival. . . . My school goes on as usual." . . .

"December 7th, 1791.

"Living quietly, though very happily, at Forncett, without having been at one ball, one play, one concert." [Miss Pollard having told her of a visit to Leeds; she, D. W., indicates that she had been at Cambridge before this, because, referring to York Minster, of which her friend writes to her, she says:] "I have a pretty good idea of your feelings on entering the Minster at York, by my own when I visited King's College Chapel at Cambridge." [Tells about the Lonsdale law suit, and that her grandmother has had possession of a very handsome estate for about a year.] "She has shewn us great kindness, and has promised to give us five hundred pounds (£100 a-piece) the first time she receives her rents. . . . Our several resources are these: the £500 which my grandmother is to give us, £500 which is due on account of my mother's fortune, about £200 which my uncle Kit owes us, and £1000 at present in the hands of our guardians, and about £150 which we are to receive out of the Newbiggin estate, with what may be adjudged as due to us from Lord L. My brother Richard has about £100 per annum, and William has received his education, for which a reduc-

tion will be made ; so that I hope, unless we are treated in the most unjust manner possible, my three younger brothers and I will have £1000 a-piece, deducting in William's share the expense of his education. . . . John is to go out in the spring in the *Thetis*, East Indiaman. . . . William is arrived, I hope, by this time at Orleans, where he means to pass the winter for the purpose of learning the French language, which will qualify him for the office of travelling companion to some young gentleman, if he can get recommended. . . . He is at the same time engaged in the study of the Spanish language, and if he settles in England on his return, he will begin the study of the Oriental languages. . . . We are going to establish a school of industry. My uncle is at present in treaty about a house for the purpose. The operations of my little school have been suspended ever since the birth of Christopher."

Returning to England, and to Cambridge, Wordsworth took his B.A. degree in January 1791. He went immediately afterwards to Forncett Rectory, and spent six weeks with his sister.

The following letter from Dorothy to Miss Pollard, though written four months later, may be given here, from its allusions to her brother's visit to the Rectory :—

"FORNCETT, *May 23rd*, 1791.

"My brother William is now in Wales, where he intends making a pedestrian tour, along with his old friend and companion Jones, at whose house he is at present staying. . . . My aunt would tell you that she saw my brothers Richard and William in town. I hope John will arrive there in about a month. We are daily expecting tidings of the *Abergavenny*. I heard from my brother Kit lately. He tells me he has been upon a pedestrian tour amongst

the Lakes, with two of his schoolfellows. He is to come to Cambridge next October. . . . The idea of having him so near is, you will imagine, very agreeable to me. I hope we shall see much of each other. He is a most amiable young man." [Speaks of the prospect of a settlement "in about a year" of the Lonsdale claims.] "I have been three times at Norwich lately, which is something extraordinary, as we stir little from home. These three journeys produced three visits to the theatre. . . . I rise about six every morning; and, as I have no companion, walk with a book till half-past eight, if the weather permits; if not, I read in the house. Sometimes we walk in the mornings, but seldom more than half-an-hour, just before dinner. After tea we all walk together till about eight, and I then walk alone, as long as I can, in the garden. I am particularly fond of a moonlight or twilight walk. It is at this time I think most of my absent friends. My brother William was with us six months* in the depth of winter. You may recollect that at that time the weather was exceedingly mild. We used to walk every morning about two hours; and every evening we went into the garden, at four or half-past four, and used to pace backwards and forwards till six. Unless you have accustomed yourself to this kind of walking, you will have no idea that it can be pleasant; but I assure you it is most delightful, and if you and I happened to be together in the country (as we probably may), we shall try how you like my plan, if you are not afraid of the evening air."

* So it is written, but she must mean weeks, not months. Wordsworth graduated in January, and went to London in February, 1791.

CHAPTER V.

LONDON: FRANCE: THE REVOLUTION.

IN February 1791 Wordsworth went up from Cambridge to London, where he stayed for three months. For the particulars of his residence there we are mainly indebted to his autobiographical poem. In it he apostrophises the city as a "Grave Teacher, stern Preceptress!" In the seventh and eighth books he describes both his glimpse of the metropolis in 1788, when he was a "transient visitant," and his longer stay and fuller impressions in 1791. Still earlier, however, in his Hawkshead schooldays, one of his companions, a cripple from birth, had been sent to London, and on his return to the north the boy Wordsworth scanned him curiously; and was rather disappointed to find that he had not been changed in look and air from having been even for a day or two in that "fairy land" of his young imagination. The most mysterious thing to him—in that village where each was known to all—was to find that people in London could be next-door neighbours, and yet not know each other's names!

In the seventh book of *The Prelude* he describes the common sights of the metropolis in no commonplace fashion. He speaks of the characters he met with, the pantomimic scenes he witnessed, and the degradation as well as the gaiety of the town. It may surprise some to know that the theatre was "his dear delight." In seeking out and chronicling those links that "bind the perishable hours of life" together, he records some trivial things, and some

incidents which belonged as he puts it) to "the suburbs of the mind"; although some were really trivial to his eye. He went to the Law Courts to listen to the pleadings of the barristers: to the Houses of Parliament, to hear the speeches of statesmen. Poor parents with sick children in their arms, blind beggars in the streets, mobs in the thoroughfares, the booths of strolling vendors, puppet shows at St. Bartholomew's festival: all had a new human interest to him. The noisy picture might be wearisome to one who did not look at it steadily, and see it whole; but to one who had, "amongst least things, an under-sense of greatest," who "saw the parts as parts, but with the feeling of the whole," it was far otherwise. The great lesson which Wordsworth bore away with him, from these few weeks' experience of London life was this: he realised more than ever before, and more than was possible elsewhere, "the unity of man." He saw one spirit predominant over the ignorance and vice of the city. This was, in fact, the same great and radical truth which he had learned before, amongst the silence of the hills—the sense of Unity, of Harmony, of Law, of Order, and of Love everywhere diffused, though often hidden under strange guises. The same idea now kept him at rest, in his first experience of the real turmoil of city life, kept him anchored securely, while the vessel in which he sailed rocked temporarily upon the waters.

The eighth book of *The Prelude* is entitled "Retrospect: Love of Nature leading to love of Man"; and it traces what he owed while in London to the influence that followed him from the place of his nativity and upbringing. In spite of all that had been done and suffered—and of what was then being done and then suffering in the great city—he felt that he could still converse with a hidden Majesty and Power. Neither the vice nor the misery he witnessed

could shake his trust in what human nature *might yet become*. He had been taught amongst the hills to believe in man, and in man's destiny, in an Infinite Living Power, in a Providence that was world-wide, and that "rolled through all things," guiding every object in external Nature equally; and how could he cease to believe in its sovereignty over man, notwithstanding the apparent chaos of our present life?

On the 26th June Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to Miss Pollard:—

"FORNCETT, *Sunday Morning, June 26, 1791.*"

"I often hear from my brother William, who is now in Wales, where I think he seems so happy that it is probable he will remain there all the summer, or a great part of it." [She refers to her brother Kit, and says], "his disposition is of the same caste as William's, and his inclinations have taken the same turn, but he is much more likely to make his fortune. He is not so warm as William, but has a most affectionate heart. His abilities, though not so great perhaps as his brother's, may be of more use to him; as he has not fixed his mind upon any particular species of reading, or conceived an aversion to any. He is not fond of mathematics, but has resolution sufficient to study them, because it will be impossible for him to obtain a fellowship without them. William, you may have heard, lost the chance (indeed the certainty) of a fellowship, by not combating his inclinations. He gave way to his natural dislike to study so dry as many parts of mathematics, consequently could not succeed at Cambridge. He reads Italian, Spanish, French, Greek, Latin, and English, but never opens a mathematical book. We promise ourselves much pleasure from reading Italian together at some time. He wishes that I was acquainted with the Italian poets. . . . William

has a great attachment to poetry; so indeed has Kit, but William particularly, which is not the most likely thing to produce his advancement in the world. His pleasures are chiefly of the imagination. He is never so happy as when in a beautiful country. Do not think in what I have said that he reads not at all, for he does read a great deal; and not only poetry, and other languages he is acquainted with, but history, &c., &c. Kit has made a very good proficiency in learning. He is just seventeen. At October '92 we shall lose him at Cambridge." . . . [Tells of riding a good deal. She had a horse of her uncle's.] "The country about, though not romantic or picturesque, is very pleasing; the surface slowly varied; and we have great plenty of wood, but a sad want of water."

Leaving London in the end of May 1791, Wordsworth paid a visit to his friend Robert Jones at Plas-yn-llan, in the Vale of Clwydd. From his friend's house he wrote thus to another fellow-student at Cambridge, William Mathews:—

"PLAS-YN-LLAN, NEAR RUTHIN,
"DENBIGHSHIRE, June 17, 1791.

"You will see by the date of this letter that I am in Wales, and whether you remember the place of Jones' residence or no, you will immediately conclude that I am with him. I quitted London about three weeks ago, where my time passed in a strange manner, sometimes whirled about by the vortex of its *strenua inertia*, and sometimes thrown by the eddy into a corner of the stream. Think not, however, that I had not many pleasant hours. . . . My time has been spent since I reached Wales in a very agreeable manner, and Jones and I intend to make a tour through its northern counties,—on foot, as you will easily suppose."

They did so: and, as Wordsworth puts it in the Dedication of the *Descriptive Sketches* (inscribed to Jones), they saw the sunsets which give such splendour to the Vale of Clwyd, Snowdon, the chair of Idris, the quiet village of Bethgelert, Menai and her druids, the Alpine steepes of the Conway, and the still more interesting windings of the wizard stream of the Dee." * Their ascent of Snowdon is described in the fourteenth Book of *The Prelude*. At the summit of the mountain at the dead of night, a sea of mist around, and a hundred hills seeming to rise out of it, the moonlight overhead, and the noise of waters, of torrents and streams innumerable, mounting to them, "roaring with one voice," became to Wordsworth the emblem of a mind that feeds upon infinity. A power within Nature, moving it, and yet one within its multitudinous voices and forces, seemed to be displaying itself through outward things. As creative minds build up the greatest things from least suggestions, not subdued but only stimulated by the impressions of sense, so it seemed to him that the Omnipresent Power within nature disclosed its presence, and yet attested its supremacy. We may connect with this a familiar passage in *The Excursion*, beginning

"Within the soul a faculty abides." †

On the 3rd August he again writes to Mathews from Plas-yn-Ilan: "I regret much not to have been made acquainted with your wish to have employed your vacation in a pedestrian tour, both on your own account, as it would have contributed greatly to exhilarate your spirits, and on mine, as we should have gained much from the addition of your society. Such an excursion would have served like an Aurora Borealis to gild your long Lapland night of melancholy."

* See vol. i. p. 287.

† See vol. v. p. 188.

These pedestrian tours and tentative efforts in poetic work were delightful; but how was the young poet to maintain himself? He thought of many things. He was urged by his friend Robinson to take Orders, and it was a letter received from this friend, while he was staying at Plas-yn-llan, that led him to leave the place abruptly. On the 23rd September we again find him at Cambridge. He writes to Mathews: "I quitted Wales on a summons from Mr Robinson, a gentleman you most likely have heard me speak of, respecting my going into Orders, and taking a curacy at Harwich, which curacy he considered as introductory to the living. I thought it was best to pay my respects to him in person, to inform him that I am not of age for ordination." In the same letter he tells Mathews that he means to "remain at Cambridge till the University fills."

On the 9th October 1791, Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to Miss Pollard from Forncett:—

"My brother John is arrived in England, and, I am told, is grown a very tall handsome man. . . . Kit is entered at Trinity College, and I hope that we two meet by this time next year. William is at Cambridge . . . I know not when my brother William will go into the north; probably not so soon as he intended, as he is going to begin a new course of study, which he may perhaps not be able to go on with so well in that part of the world, as I conjecture he may find it difficult to meet with books. He is going, by the advice of my uncle William, to study the Oriental Languages."

It being impossible for him to take Orders at his present age, he thought of writing for the Newspapers as a means of livelihood; but, having enough of money for a year's sojourn abroad, and being now more interested in contemporary events in France than he was when he passed through it

with Jones in 1790, he resolved to spend twelve months on the Continent. He wrote to Mathews from Brighton on the 23rd November that he was on "his way to Orleans, where he proposed to pass the winter." As we have seen, his sister wrote to Miss Pollard that his object was to acquire a knowledge of French and also of Spanish, which he might perhaps turn to account subsequently as travelling tutor.

The contrast between the course of Wordsworth's life hitherto, and what it became during that winter of 1791, was great. Carlyle has somewhere said, that from the silent glens of Nithsdale to the rattling whinstones of Piccadilly, is but a step. That contrast Wordsworth had already known; but, from the quiet of the Lakes and the monotony of Cambridge, he was now transferred to the rapidly-shifting scenes and the wild excitements of France, in the most stirring period of its history. His aim in crossing the channel was chiefly, as his sister tells us, to learn the language; but in addition, there is no doubt that the state of the country, and sympathy with its aspirations after liberty, "lured him forth."* The readiest way to Orleans was through Paris, and there he stayed some days. He visited, in haste, "each spot of old or recent fame," the latter chiefly. He went to the National Assembly, and there heard the futile, weak, excited debates; attended the Club of the Jacobins, and

"saw the Revolutionary Power
Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms."

In the spot where the Bastille had stood (destroyed the previous year) he sat in the sun, and gathered a stone from the rubbish, and "pocketed the relic." It was a stirring time for France: the Assembly of Senators, "effervescent,

* *see The Prelude*, book ix., vol. iii. p. 308.

well-intentioned,"* divided against itself, to-day swearing fealty to the Constitution with enthusiastic "vivats," to-morrow quarrelling over it in hatred; the king accepting the "rheumatic Constitution,"† and yet unable to carry out; in the Jacobin amphitheatre, the wild harangues of the leaders of the new "mother-society" of the world; Liberty only thought of in connection with Equality, and the levelling of all distinctions.

It is somewhat curious that in the midst of these scenes Wordsworth was not much moved. He even tells us that he "affected more emotion than he felt." This was perhaps partly due to his ignorance of the nature of the movement, partly also to a dim perception that there might be another side to it, and that there was something hollow in its aim. Certainly he was not stirred by it sufficiently to induce him to remain in Paris. He pushed on to Orleans, where he wintered. There he even likened himself to a plant under glass in a greenhouse, when every bush and tree in the country was shaking to the roots. At Orleans his close associates were a band of military officers stationed in the city, men who had but one aim, viz., to undo the mischief already done to their country. They seem to have liked Wordsworth, and welcomed him in their society. He gives us a striking account of them, in that time of universal excitement and social earthquake, when the soil of common sense seemed almost "too hot to tread on," although he laughs at the bare idea of presenting an adequate picture of it to posterity.

Wordsworth had never himself seen anything contrary to the order of Nature in certain men possessing rank above others. This was rather the order of Nature. His complaint had been that the best persons in the world were

* See Carlyle's *French Revolution*.

† Carlyle.

the world's rulers, as they ought to be. But the easy, almost communal life at Hawkshead, and the fraternal equality of undergraduate life at Cambridge, prepared him for sympathising with the aspirations of France at this time ; and the sight of soldiers hastening along the roads near Orleans, to join the war in the frontier, in defence of what they deemed the cause of liberty, touched him to the quick. With one of this band of officers—the patriot Beaupuis—intimacy ripened into friendship. They walked many a mile in the woods around the city, and by the banks of the Loire, discussing the origin and end of government, and its best forms, the personal and social virtues, the rights of man as man, his fundamental nature and destiny—"heart-bracing colloquies" Wordsworth called them. They traversed history for ancient parallels, and applied them to the events of the hour. One day they met a poor girl in a rural lane, languid, famished, leading a lean heifer by a cord tied to her arm, and herself busy knitting with thin hands. Beaupuis turned round and said, "It is against *that* that we are fighting." Wordsworth told Coleridge in after years that if it was a joy to them to discuss the state of man, and question of human liberty and destiny, by the banks of their favourite Cumbrian streams, it was doubly so to do this with one who had to be an actor in the great tragedy, and to put the doctrines which he held into living deeds. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth likens Beaupuis to Dion, and speaks of him as a man worthy to be associated with the noblest of ancient times.

There is little doubt that it was these walks and talks with Beaupuis that stirred Wordsworth's soul so as to call out its latent republican feeling for a time. He returned to Paris much more of a radical than he left it. He desired that every law should be abolished that legalised the exclusion of any class from political privilege. He wished to see the people having "a strong hand" in the framing of their

own laws, and from that he anticipated "better days to all mankind."

During this winter of 1791-2, he was also busy with the work of writing a "descriptive sketch" in verse of his tour in the Alps with Jones. The style of the poem is Pope's, and its form is that of Goldsmith; yet the voice is the voice of Wordsworth. But a critical estimate of the poem must be postponed.

Early in the spring of 1792, Wordsworth went from Orleans to Blois, and on the 17th of May he wrote thus to his friend Mathews:—

"The horrors excited by the relation of the events consequent upon the commencement of hostilities is general. Not but that there are some men who felt a gloomy satisfaction from a measure which seemed to put the patriot army out of a possibility of success. An ignominious flight, the massacre of their general, a dance performed with savage joy round his burning body, the murder of six prisoners, are events which would have arrested the attention of the reader of the annals of Morocco."

He then expresses his fear that the patriot army would be routed by the invaders. But "suppose," he adds, "that the German army is at the gates of Paris, what will be the consequence? It will be impossible for it to make any material alterations in the constitution; impossible to reinstate the clergy in its ancient guilty splendour; impossible to restore an existence to the noblesse similar to that it before enjoyed; impossible to add much to the authority of the king. Yet there are in France some (millions?)—I speak without exaggeration—who expect that this will take place." *

We do not know much of how Wordsworth spent his

* See *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 75.

time at Blois. But there is a passage in *The Prelude* which refers to it, though not given in its chronological place in that poem. In the eighth book he tells us that for two and twenty summers Man had been subordinate to Nature in his regards: Nature "a passion, a rapture often," Man only "a delight occasional," "*his hour being not yet come.*" Now Wordsworth's twenty-second summer was the one he spent at Blois; and while there was less to attract him in the scenery of Blois than there had been in England, these late conversations with Beaupuis, and the fresh incidents of every day, were such as now to give Man the first place in his thoughts,—Man in his aspirations and struggles, in his individual nature, and his social destiny.

The "September massacres" had taken place in the first week of that month, while Wordsworth was still at Blois. When he reached Paris, Louis the XVI. was dethroned, and in prison with his wife and children. The Republic had been decreed on the 22nd September, but Wordsworth thought that the "dire work of massacre" being over, and the "earth free of them for ever," France would at once reach the promised goal of universal brotherhood. He went to the prison where the king was in captivity, the Tuilleries, the Place du Carousal, where the dead had lain so lately, "upon the dying heaped." These things were mysteries to him. He likened them to the contents of a book, written in a tongue he could not read. He went back to his lodging, a high lonely room at the top of a large hotel, and all night kept watch, reading by the light of a small taper, thinking of the massacres and their results. He remembered that the tides come again, that the earthquakes and the hurricanes return; "all things have second birth." The place he was in appeared defenceless, as a wood where wild beasts roam; and, in the weird silence, he seemed to hear a voice crying out to the whole city of Paris, "Sleep no more."

Next day he had some experience of how rapidly the tides of revolution *do* turn. In the streets hawkers were bawling, "Denunciation of the Crimes of Maximilian Robespierre." He heard Louvet denounce him from the Tribune, but noted the failure of his charge. He saw that Liberty, and the issues of Life and Death, were again in the hands of those few men who ruled the metropolis. Here was tyranny coming back hydra-headed. His inmost soul was agitated. He not only grieved, but he thought of remedies, and would himself have willingly undertaken personal service in the cause. He thought how much depended in all great crises on the action of individuals, and how a true and strong soul, faithful to duty, can guide the unreasoning masses. But he remembered that those who have not been trained for action are unfit to mingle in the thick of social struggles. It would have been an utterly quixotic enterprise for him to have attempted to do so. He believed, however, that if "one paramount mind" *had* arisen, it could have ended the chaos, and "cleared a passage for just government." In this frame of mind he left Paris, and returned to England in December 1792. He had spent fully two months in the French capital. Had he not left it at the time he did, he would have been soon led to make common cause with the Brissotins, with many of whom he was intimate, and would doubtless have fallen a victim along with them to the rival Jacobin party in the following year.

While Wordsworth was in France we do not hear much of his sister's life at Forncett; but a letter addressed to Miss Pollard, on the 6th of May 1792, may be quoted, and the substance of another given.

"FORNCETT, *Tuesday, May 6th, 1792.*

[She speaks of a prospect of going to Windsor in the autumn, but while pleased to go, was more pleased in prospect

of returning to the quiet of Forncett. John had spent four months at Forncett; was now in London, upon his road into Cumberland, and intended to sail from Whitehaven for the West Indies.] "I promised to transcribe some of William's compositions. As I made the promise I will give you a little sonnet, but all the same I charge you, as you value our friendship, not to read it, or to show it to any one—to your sister, or any other person. . . . I take the first that offers. It is only valuable to me because the lane which gave birth to it was the favourite evening walk of my dear William and me.

"Sweet was the walk along the narrow lane
At noon, the bank and hedgerows all the way
Shagged with wild pale green tufts of fragrant hay,
Caught by the hawthorns from the loaded wane
Which Age, with many a slow stoop, strove to gain;
And Childhood seeming still more busy, took
His little rake with cunning sidelong look,
Sauntering to pluck the strawberries wild unseen.
Now too, on melancholy's idle dream
Musing, the lone spot with my soul agrees
Quiet and dark; for through the thick-wove trees
Scarce peeps the curious star till solemn gleams
The clouded moon, and calls me forth to stray
Through tall green silent woods and ruins grey."

[She adds] "I have not chosen this sonnet because of any particular beauty it has; it was the first I laid my hands upon."

WINDSOR, *October 16th, 1792.*

[Left Forncett, July 31st. In London, August 1st. Did not like London at all; was heartily rejoiced to quit it for Windsor, a week after arrival. Went to the top of St Paul's. Reached Windsor on the 9th August. Charmed with it. Met the Royal Family walking on the terrace every evening, and admired the King in his conversation with her uncle and aunt, and his interest (and that of the

Princesses) in the children of her uncle and aunt. From the terrace above watches the Queen driving a phaeton with four white ponies in the Lower Park, and is charmed with the fairy-like scene; is taken country drives, and to see races, and to several balls. Describes the Windsor cloisters.]

In December 1792 Wordsworth had again reached London. He doubtless went to his eldest brother Richard's house, the solicitor. His sister writes from Fornsett, December 22: "William is in London. He writes to me regularly." He seems to have gone down to Fornsett almost immediately, for Dorothy speaks in a letter (June 16, 1793)* of his having spent Christmas there, and of their daily walks in the garden of the Rectory. Here doubtless it was that the publication of *The Evening Walk*, dedicated to his sister, was talked of and definitely decided. It is extremely likely that it was copied out for press by her; and it must have been published early in 1793, for on February 16th she writes to Miss Pollard of a review of the book.

Wordsworth's movements during the earlier months of 1793 are not easily traced. Probably the publication of *The Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches* occupied him a good deal in London. Mr Myers, on the evidence of an MS. letter of Dorothy Wordsworth's, thinks that these poems were published in 1792; but this letter has no date appended to it by the writer, except "Fornsett, February 16," and internal evidence shows that it was written in 1793. Besides, the first edition of the poems are dated, and speak for themselves.

The work of seeing these earliest volumes through the press would take some time. But Wordsworth also says that, now a "patriot of the world," he could not at once return to his

* See p. 86.

former "tuneful haunts." He found London excited over the question of negro emancipation ; but that seemed to him a small question, compared with the vast problem now being wrought out in France, and one that would easily solve itself, if the larger question was first disposed of.

Of the political situation he wrote thus to his friend Mathews : "I disapprove of monarchical and aristocratical governments, however modified. Hereditary distinctions, and privileged orders of every species, I think, must necessarily counteract the progress of human improvement. Hence it follows, that I am not among the admirers of the British constitution. I conceive that a more excellent system of civil policy might be established among us ; yet in my ardour to attain the goal, I do not forget the nature of the ground where the race is to be run. The destruction of those institutions which I condemn, appears to me to be hastening on too rapidly. *I recoil from the very idea of a revolution.* I am a determined enemy to every species of violence. I see no connection, but what the obstinacy of pride and ignorance renders necessary, between justice and the sword,—between reason and bonds. I deplore the miserable condition of the French, and think that *we* can only be guarded from the same scourge by the undaunted efforts of good men. . . . I severely condemn all inflammatory addresses to the passions of men. I know that the multitude walk in darkness. I would put into each man's hands a lantern, to guide him ; and not have him to set out upon his journey depending for illumination on abortive flashes of lightning, or the coruscations of transitory meteors." *

A much more remarkable letter, however, was the one which he wrote when in London to the Bishop of Landaff, on the subject of the Revolution in France,—an essay in the

* See *Memoirs*, i., p. 79.

form of a letter. This letter is alluded to in the Bishop of Lincoln's *Memoirs* of his uncle, but it was not published till 1876, when Mr Grossart edited the Prose Works of the poet. It is so remarkable as to warrant a detailed reference to it.

Bishop Waters, of the See of Landaff, had preached a sermon in 1785, which he published in January 1793, with an *Appendix*—issued also separately—entitled, “*Strictures on the French Revolution, and the British Constitution, &c., &c.*” The advertisement of such a work would naturally awaken the curiosity, and whet the intellectual appetite of a youth of twenty-three, just returned from the stirring scenes in Paris. Its perusal stirred him to the very depths. It revived the intense republican feeling, awakened in the Orleans woods by Beaupuis, and led him to address the Bishop in a letter, which is equally remarkable for its insight, and its outspoken directness. The title of Wordsworth's reply is “*A letter to the Bishop of Landaff on the extraordinary avowal of his Political Principles, contained in the appendix to his late sermon, by a Republican!*” The force of its reasoning is great, but its chief interest is a biographical one. It shows us how clearly, after he left France, Wordsworth grasped the higher but *unconscious* aims of the revolutionary movement, detaching them from the acts of the men who were its too enthusiastic leaders—“*blind leaders of the blind,*” who accordingly “*both fell into the ditch,*”—and how he could look beneath the frenzy and the horror that attended it. It is the best evidence we possess, not only of the way in which the revolutionary movement fascinated Wordsworth, by its promise of “*liberty, equality, fraternity,*” but also of his insight into the principle which underlay it,—a principle to which he clung to the last, even when borne back on the full tide of a healthy conservative re-

action. In many things Wordsworth remained a radical to the end; a conservative radical let us say, (or a radical-conservative), but still an advocate for the inalienable rights of the people. We shall have abundant evidence of this, as we proceed.

It would probably have been useless for Wordsworth to have signed, and published this "Letter," in 1793. We do not know—as in the case of Hume's celebrated letter written in boyhood to his "Physician," if he ever sent it to the Bishop; or, if so, if it was signed; and, if signed, if it received an acknowledgment in answer. Had he printed it, it would certainly have led him into distracting and unprofitable controversy.

He begins his "Letter" by taunting the Bishop of Landaff for deserting the popular cause; and referring to Addison's allegoric "Vision of Mirza"—which, by the way, the poet had been translating into Italian during his last year at Cambridge—he pictures the Bishop rather boldly, as falling through one of the trap doors in the bridge into the waters of oblivion. He speaks of the "idle cry of modish lamentation, which has resounded from the court to the cottage," over the late royal martyr (Louis XVI.); and regrets that, "at a period big with the fate of the human race," the Bishop should attach so much importance to the fate of the French king. "I flatter myself," he adds, "I am not alone, even in this *kingdom*, when I wish that it may please the Almighty, neither by the hands of his priests nor his nobles, to raise his posterity to the throne of his ancestors." He admits the horrors perpetrated in the name of Liberty; but "have you so little knowledge of the nature of men as to be ignorant that a time of revolution is not the season of true Liberty? Alas! the obstinacy and perversion of man is such that she is too often obliged to borrow the very arms of despotism to overthrow him; and, in order to reign in peace, must establish herself by violence. She

deplores such stern necessity, but the safety of the people, her supreme necessity, is her consolation. This apparent contradiction between the principles of Liberty and the march of Revolutions; this spirit of jealousy, of severity, of disquietude, of vexation, indispensable from a state of war between the oppressors and oppressed, must of necessity confuse the ideas of morality, and contract the best affections of the human heart." Referring to the fate of the French priesthood, he says it is some consolation that "a part of their prodigious mass of riches is gone to preserve from famine some thousands of curés who were pining in villages unobserved by courts."

He "proceeds to principles," and boldly defends the Republic. In adopting it, the French people only exercised "that right in which liberty essentially resides." He is surprised that the Bishop should think of "dictating to the world a servile adoption of the British constitution." He quotes, with scorn, the Bishop's own wise sentence: "In a Republic the bulk of the people are deceived with a show of liberty. They live in it under the most odious of all tyrannies—the tyranny of their equals." He proceeds to trace the root of human misery, and the evils which desolate States, to the fact that the Governors have interests distinct from the governed; and he infers that whatever tends "to identify the two must also, in the same degree, promote the general welfare." He advocates universal suffrage, and a brief tenure of office on the part of every legislator, because our best guarantee for the virtue of office exists when the private citizen knows that "to-morrow he may either smart under the oppression, or bless the justice of the law which he has enacted to-day."

He defends the insight of the masses, and pleads for their extended education. He maintains that if the laws of a country proceeded from the general will of the people, much

less force would be needed to secure obedience to them. He objects to regal government, from its instability; and boldly affirms that from the "eternal nature of man" the office of King is a trial to which human virtue is not equal; and, while admitting that the end of government cannot be secured without some members of society commanding, and others obeying, he thinks that nothing will check the abuses of power so much, as when "the person in whom authority has been lodged occasionally descends to the level of private citizen; he will learn from it a wholesome lesson, and the people will be less liable to confound the person with the power."

He admits that there are inequalities inseparable from civil society, but denounces the "unnatural monster of primogeniture," and objects to those "badges of fictitious superiority," such as stars, ribbons, garters, &c. Even titles are "outrages done to the dignity of our nature." "He who to-day merits the civic wreath may to-morrow deserve the Tarpeian rock;" and, when titles descend, successors sometimes abuse them, while labour is dishonoured. The Bishop had said that the people of these islands were "in the possession of both liberty and equality." Wordsworth tells him that "acquiescence is not choice, obedience is not freedom," and that every man denied the suffrage in Great Britain was a Helot. He quotes Burke's statement about the perpetual obligations of the Constitution, which he calls a "dead parchment," and tells the Bishop that he is "aiming an arrow at Liberty and Philosophy, the eyes of the human race." At the close of his letter, referring to the Bishop's defence of Liberty, and his silence about Parliamentary Reform, he writes: "In some parts of England it is quaintly said, when a drunken man is seen reeling towards his home that he has business on both sides of the road. Observing your Lordship's tortuous path, the spectators will be far from

insinuating that you have partaken of Mr Burke's intoxicating bowl. They will content themselves—shaking their heads as you stagger along—with remarking that you have business on both sides of the road.”

And yet Wordsworth himself had business, and very important business, “on both sides of the road.” He was already far more eclectic in politics, and in literary art, than he knew.

This remarkable letter to the Bishop of Landaff casts a great deal of light, however, on the evolution of his character. I do not think it has received the attention it deserves, while its ability would almost warrant its revival by the advocates of “home rule”! It would not, however, by itself, be a true reflection of the opinion and sympathies of the writer. We have seen how much his life at Hawkshead was a communal life, how in Cambridge he lived in a sort of republic, how foreign travel with Jones, and subsequent residence alone in France, developed the socialistic side of his nature; but it was by intuition that he grasped the meaning of the Revolution, and appreciated its significance,—piercing to what lay *beneath* it, and was elemental to man; and, with all its ability and subtlety, its political eloquence and inward fire, there is a strain of “apology” in that letter to the Bishop that is prophetic of reaction about to be.

There were two streams of tendency flowing side by side, and at work together, in that wondrous movement of 1792, the one a purely democratic movement, that turned for support to the primal nature and the personal “rights of man,” and could therefore ally itself easily with a stream of as pure and thorough conservatism as the world has ever known. The other was a spirit of reactionary uprising against order, of blind wrath and antagonism to those fundamental differences in humanity, which had by time been evolved, and which are at all times radical and inevitable. With the former, Wordsworth had the fullest sympathy; with the

latter, he had none. But when he tried to vindicate the Revolution in France, by the arguments advanced in this letter, he was drawn for a time unconsciously aside, by the magnetic spell of a tendency which he at heart abjured.

A reaction soon set in, and this the subsequent course of events in France itself determined. It came at first as a shock, and then as a terrible blow to Wordsworth, that the promised "liberty, equality, and fraternity" of the movement should issue in tyranny, diversity, and hate. He seems to have endured the pain of this reaction to a large extent in silence. He did not write it down, as he recorded his sympathy with the former movement. But there is no doubt that, during the first year of his return to England, the great problems of the rights of man, of political freedom, of the moral government of the world, and of human destiny *haunted* him; and he underwent a struggle in regard to them. We shall see how he emerged from this struggle, how his experience of "despondency" was followed by one of "despondency corrected," and how the influence of his sister especially helped him.

Two things, however, are to be noted at this stage. The first may perhaps explain Wordsworth's outburst of indignation in this letter to the Bishop of Landaff. It was the action of England, after the murder of the French King in January 1793, in preparing for war with France, that chiefly roused him. The idea of his own country joining with others to suppress the now insurgent cry for liberty in Europe, and taking the side of the oppressor and the tyrant, fired him with indignation. The second is that it was the action of France, in the day of its newly found freedom, becoming unjust and oppressive towards Switzerland,—the old home and bulwark of the liberties of Europe,—that disillusionized him, shewing him that the very grossest tyranny might be practised under the specious name of liberty, and

that the very champions of democracy, in levelling all distinctions, might be neither true sons of France, nor genuine citizens of the world, nor friends of the human race.*

The disappointment he underwent was, in the truest sense, an education to him. It shewed him the intellectual and moral root of the illusion, that had blinded his eye for a time, when France seemed to be

"Standing on the top of golden hours,"

and when he wrote of it—

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be *young*, was heaven."

To see the illusion that lay within the brilliant promise of that time, and yet to be made neither wildly reactionary in opinion, nor reckless in act, nor disconsolate and hopeless of the future,—in this Wordsworth stands in marked contrast with many of his contemporaries. One great lesson it taught him, more than it taught any of the rest, viz. this, how out of evil good may come, and be more signally evolved because of the disasters that have preceded it. It is one of the ideas with which his later poems are full, that the loftiest good, alike to the individual and to the race, is being constantly developed out of the most terrible disaster, by a process hidden to our eyes, yet verifiable both in personal and in national experience. We owe a great deal of this later teaching to the experience which Wordsworth passed through, in France in 1792, and in England in 1793.

It must also be remembered that what Wordsworth sympathized with—while in France, and on his return—was rather the wave of national enthusiasm, the glad uprise of the suppressed instinct of freedom, and its outcome,

"Joy in widest commonalty spread,"

* Compare the *Thanksgiving Ode*, the *Invocation to the Earth*, &c., and all the sonnets dedicated to *Liberty*.

than any intellectual doctrine as to "the rights of man," the formulated creed of the democracy. It was because he saw, (or thought he saw), by intuition, that the Central Heart of the universe beats in sympathy with the joy of each separate human heart, and reveals itself thus, that he sympathized with the movement to which he was a temporary convert; and this remained with him—this faith in the destiny of the individual, and of the race—when his "defection" from republicanism was pronounced. The truth is, Wordsworth never sympathized with the formal or rational "system" of democratic thought. He seized the movement, or rather a fragment of it, by intuition; and he partly idealized its other sides, with which—presented in prosaic literalness—he had no sympathy. And when, to attain an end with which he sympathized, dubious means, or means unrighteous, were adopted and defended,—when, *e.g.*, the Revolution swept before it not only the evils of the past, but the barriers against evil in the present, and created new ones of its own, his vivid emotional sympathy with it received a check, and finally died away. The truth is, that Wordsworth became a radical at the most susceptible age, and ceased to be one at the age when conviction usually takes deepest root. The consequence is that, in his maturer poems, we have such a sympathy with democratic aspirations, as every wise conservative will endorse; tempered by such an aversion to its revolutionary outcome, as every wise liberal must hail. The "Sonnets dedicated to Liberty" are amongst his very finest, but it is easy to see how the author of these Sonnets could afterwards write the *Thanksgiving Ode*.

Special interest attaches to the change in Wordsworth's attitude towards the French Revolution, from the references made to it, first by a contemporary, and then by a subsequent poet, by Shelley and by Browning.

Shelley addressed a Sonnet to Wordsworth, in which,

—referring to the lament in the *Ode on Immortality* that things pass away never to return—he applies it thus:—

“Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude,
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to Truth and Liberty.
Deserting them, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus, having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.”

And Browning wrote, in his lyric on *The Lost Leader*;—

“We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us—they watch from their graves.
He alone breaks from the van and the freedmen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!”

He laments, in the second stanza, that this wonderful “sinking to the rear,” and identifying himself with the radical interests and aspirations of mankind, had ceased—with this result that a new wrong had been done to the human race. Browning had been often asked who “the Lost Leader” was, and in a letter to the editor of the *Prose Works of Wordsworth*, he says that in his youth he did “use the great and venerated personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter’s model; one from which this or the other particular feature may be selected and turned to account; had I intended more, above all such a boldness as portraying the entire man, I should not have talked about ‘handfuls of silver and bits of ribbon.’” Therefore he could not allow his picture of the “change of politics in the great poet”—while he considered that defection an event to be deplored—to be “the *vera effigies* of such a moral and intellectual superiority.”

The late Baron Field—in an unpublished sketch of

Wordsworth's life, written in 1836—hazarded the remark: "Wordsworth's poetry is essentially democratic." The MS. was submitted to the poet, and he wrote in pencil opposite this sentence: "I am a lover of liberty, but know that liberty cannot exist apart from Order;* and the opinions in favour of aristocracy found in my works, the latter ones especially, all arise out of the consciousness I have that, in the present state of human knowledge, and its probable state for some ages, order cannot, and therefore liberty cannot be maintained, without degrees. It is pride and presumption, and not a real love of liberty, which has made the French and the Americans so enamoured of what they call equality." . . . "I am a Reformer; only my views of 'Reform' differ greatly from Mr Hazlitt's."

Two letters from Dorothy to her friend cast light on her brother's movements, and her own, at this stage.

"FORNCETT, *February 16th, 1793.*

"Your letter found me happy in the society of one of my dear brothers. Christopher and I have been separated for nearly five years last Christmas. Judge then of my transports at meeting him again. . . . He is like William. He has the same traits in his character, but less highly touched. He is not so ardent in any of his pursuits, but is yet more particularly attached to the same pursuits which have so irresistible an influence over William, which deprive him of the power of chaining his attention to others discordant to his feelings. Christopher is no despicable poet, but he can become a mathematician also. He is not insensible to the beauty of the Greek and Latin classics, or any of the charms of elegant literature; but he can draw his mind from these

* Compare Madame Roland's words at the foot of the scaffold, looking toward the statue of Liberty: "O Liberty, what things are done in thy name!"

fascinating studies, to others less alluring. He is steady and sincere in his attachments. William has both these virtues in an eminent degree; and a sort of violence of affection, if I may so term it, which demonstrates itself every moment of the day, when the objects of his affection are present with him, in a thousand almost imperceptible attentions to their wishes, in a sort of restless watchfulness which I know not how to describe, a tenderness that never sleeps, and at the same time such a delicacy of manners as I have observed in few men." . . . [She then expresses a hope that her friend will one day be better acquainted with W., and talks of plans for receiving her "in my little parsonage."] "I hope you will spend at least a year with me. I have laid the particular scheme of happiness for each season. When I think of winter, I hasten to furnish our little parlour. I close the shutters, set out the tea-table, brighten the fire. When our refreshment is ended, I produce our work, and William brings his book to our table, and contributes at once to our instruction and amusement; and at intervals we lay aside the book, and each hazard our observations upon what has been read, without the fear of ridicule or censure. We talk over past days. We do not sigh for any pleasures beyond our humble habitation. With such romantic dreams as these I amuse my fancy. . . . My brother and I have been endeared to each other by early misfortune. We in the same moment lost a father, a mother, a home. We have been equally deprived of our patrimony. . . . These afflictions have all contributed to unite us closer by the bonds of affection, notwithstanding we have been compelled to spend our youth far asunder. 'We drag at each remove a lengthening chain.' This idea often strikes me very forcibly. Neither absence, nor distance, nor time, can ever break the chain that links me to my brothers. . . . By this time you have doubtless

seen my brother William's poems.* . . . The scenes which he describes have been viewed with a poet's eye, and are portrayed with a poet's pencil, and the poems contain many passages exquisitely beautiful; but they also contain many faults, the chief of which is obscurity, and a too frequent use of some particular expressions and uncommon words, for instance *moveless*, which he applies in a sense if not new, at least different from its ordinary one. By *moveless*, when applied to the swan, he means that sort of motion which is smooth, without agitation; it is a very beautiful epithet, but ought to have been cautiously used. He ought, at any rate, only to have hazarded it once, instead of which it occurs three or four times. The word *viewless* also is introduced far too often. This, though not so uncommon a word as the former, ought not to have been made use of more than once or twice. I regret exceedingly that he did not submit these works to the inspection of some friend before their publication, and he also joins with me in this regret. Their faults are such as a young poet was most likely to fall into, and least likely to discover, and what the suggestions of a friend would easily have made him see, and at once correct. It is, however, an error he will never fall into again. . . . My brother Kit and I, while he was at Fornsett, amused ourselves by analysing every line, and prepared a very bulky criticism, which he was to transmit to William as soon as he could have added to it the remarks of a Cambridge friend. At the conclusion of *The Evening Walk* I think you would be pleased with these lines—

“ ‘Thus Hope, first pouring,’ ” &c.

[She refers to the picture of their small cottage on the horizon of hope, but realises the “dark and broad gulf of time” between.*]

* See *The Evening Walk*.

"There are some very glaring faults, but I hope that you will discover many beauties, which could only have been created by the imagination of a *poet*."

The following undated letter of Miss Wordsworth's, addressed to the same friend, Miss Pollard, evidently belongs to the year 1793, and was written at Fornsett.

"The evening is a lovely one, and I have strolled into a neighbouring meadow, where I am enjoying the melody of birds, and the busy sounds of a fine summer's evening, while my eye is gratified by a smiling prospect of cultivated fields richly wooded, our own church, and the parsonage house." [She laments her solitude, but anticipates the time when she and her brother William will be together and have Miss Pollard for guest.] "He is now going upon a tour to the West of England, along with a gentleman who was formerly a schoolfellow,* a man of fortune, who is to bear all the expense of the journey, and only requests the favour of William's company." [She describes her brother's appearance]: "his person is not in his favour," "he is certainly rather plain; otherwise has an extremely thoughtful countenance." . . . "My brother's tour will not be completed till October." . . . "This favourite brother of mine happens to be no favourite with any of his near relations, except his brothers, by whom he is adored, I mean by John and Christopher." . . . She speaks of the prejudices "of my two uncles against my dear William; the subject is an unpleasant one." "He has been somewhat to blame, yet I think excuse might have been found in his natural disposition."

"'In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,' &c.

That verse of Beattie's *Minstrel* always reminds me of him

* William Calvert.

and indeed the whole character of Edwin resembles much that William was when I first knew him, after leaving Halifax.

“ ‘ And oft he traced the uplands,’ ” &c., &c.

She quotes a part of a letter from her brother to herself, in which he speaks of “ that sympathy which will almost identify us, when we have stolen to our little cottage.”]

In another letter Wordsworth speaks of accepting Calvert's offer,* and says to his sister, “ Write, as I have written this letter, at twenty different sittings or standings, whenever you find a moment to yourself.”

* *I.e.*, the offer that he should defray all the expenses of the tour.

CHAPTER VI.

UNSETTLEMENT: WANDERINGS IN WALES AND CUMBER- LAND; ETC.

WORDSWORTH went from London to the Isle of Wight for a month in the summer of 1793, with his friend, William Calvert. They saw the English fleet in the Solent, preparing for expected war. Every evening, as the sunset cannon was fired at Portsmouth, it roused in his mind visions of possible disaster, or of long-continued misery in store for the world.

Leaving the Isle of Wight,—and (writing of it in 1842) he says it was “with melancholy forebodings” * that he did so,—he drove with Calvert through the New Forest to Salisbury. An accident occurring there, put a stop to their intended tour. Their carriage was wrecked in a ditch. Calvert went to the north on horseback, and Wordsworth walked, *via* Bristol, through South Wales, and thence onwards to the house of his other Welsh friend, Jones. Before leaving Salisbury, however, he spent three days among “the wilds of Sarum’s Plain.” Ranging over the trackless pastoral downs, or along the bare white roads, he strove to realise the state of matters in the Druid time. He saw in imagination the ancestral past, the primitive Britons in wolf-skin vests striding across the wold, and sacrificial altars flaming in the darkness. He traced the circle of Stonehenge, and seemed to see the long-bearded Teachers with white wands, pointing alternately to the sky, and to the mighty

* See the “Advertisement” to *Guilt and Sorrow*, 1842.

Stones, arranged by them to represent their knowledge of the heavens. His Salisbury wanderings, during these three days, gave rise to the poem which he first called *The Female Vagrant*, but afterwards *Guilt and Sorrow*, or *Incidents on Sarum Plain*.*

From Salisbury he proceeded on foot to Bath, thence to Bristol, next to the Wye, to Tintern Abbey, and on to Wales. This solitary visit to the Wye is referred to at the beginning of the *Lines addressed to Tintern Abbey*, in 1798. From Tintern he went up the river to Goodrich, and there, in the ruined courtyard of the old castle, he met the little girl, who persisted in reckoning her dead brothers as still in the family circle.† He went from Goodrich through South Wales, and thence to the house of his friend Jones, at Plas-yn-llan.

The very practical question of his own future, which had often been before him, had now to be faced, and, if possible, settled. Being twenty-three years of age, he could now have taken orders, if he chose. But he felt no vocation to do so, and his sense of duty would not permit him to become a clergyman merely to obtain a means of livelihood, or with a view to some future preferment.

His sister shared his anxieties, and wrote thus to Miss Pollard :—

“FORNCETT, June 16, Sunday Morning, 1793.

I cannot foresee the day of my felicity, the day on which I am once more to find a home under the same roof as my brother. All is still obscure and dark.

You remember the enthusiasm with which we used to be fired, when in the back kitchen, the croft, or in any of our favourite haunts, we built our little Tower of Joy. . . .

* See the “Advertisement” to *Guilt and Sorrow*, 1842.

† See *We are Seven*.

Let us never forget these days. . . . I often hear from my dear brother William. I am very anxious about him just now, as he has not yet got an employment. He is looking out, and wishing for the opportunity of engaging himself as tutor to some young gentleman, an office for which he is peculiarly well qualified. . . . I cannot describe his attention to me. There was no pleasure that he would not have given up with joy for half an hour's conversation with me. It was in winter (at Christmas) that he was last at Forncett; and every day, as soon as we rose from dinner, we used to pace the gravel walk in the garden till six o'clock, when we received a summons (which was always welcome) to tea. Nothing but rain or snow prevented our taking this walk. Often have I gone out, when the keenest north wind has been whistling amongst the trees over our head, and have paced that walk in the garden, which will always be dear to me—from the remembrance of those very long conversations I have had upon it supported by my brother's arm. Ah! I never thought of the cold when he was with me. I am as heretical as yourself in my opinions concerning love and friendship. I am very sure that love will never bind me closer to any human being than friendship binds me to you my earliest friends, and to William my earliest and my dearest male friend. . . ."

The most of the autumn of 1793 was spent with Jones. With him he renewed his wanderings on foot in North Wales, traversing much the same ground as Coleridge did with a friend in the following year on a pedestrian tour. At this time, Coleridge was at Cambridge, and the two men had not yet met.

Coleridge's own account of his first knowledge of Wordsworth's poems is given in the *Biographia Literaria*, chap. iv. "During the last year of my residence at Cambridge, 1794, I

became acquainted with Mr Wordsworth's first publication,* entitled *Descriptive Sketches*, and seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced."

The earliest authentic notice of Coleridge's knowledge of Wordsworth occurs in the Cambridge Diary of Christopher Wordsworth, the poet's brother, afterwards master of Trinity, extracts from which are published by his grandson, in his *Social Life at the English Universities in the eighteenth century*. In that diary the following is recorded:—"Tuesday, Nov. 5, 1793.—Round about nine o'clock by Bilsbarrow and Le Grice, with a proposal to become member of a literary society: the members they mentioned as having already come into the plan, [S. T.] Coleridge, *Jes.*, Setterthwaite, Rough, and themselves, *Trin. Coll.*, and Franklin, *Pembroke*. . . . Was to have gone to Coleridge's to wine to consult on the plan. . . . Got all into a box, and (having met with the Monthly Review of my Brother's Poems) entered into a good deal of literary and critical conversation on Dr Darwin, Miss Seward, Mrs Smith, Bowles, and my Brother. Coleridge spoke of the esteem in which my Brother was holden by a society at Exeter, of which Downman and Hole were members, as did Bilsbarrow (which he had before told me), of his repute with Dr Darwin, Miss Seward, &c., at Derby. . . .

Saturday, 9.—. . . No author ought, I think, without he enters the world with considerable advantages, to begin with publishing a very elaborate work, however, not a work upon which tastes may very considerably vary, *e.g.*, my

* It may have been "first,"—preceding *The Evening Walk*,—but we have no evidence. The first (quarto) edition of each poem, published in 1793, refers to the other as "by the same author." It is not unworthy of note that both these early quarto publications were by Johnson, the publisher and friend of Cowper, who brought out the first edition of *The Task* only nine years earlier, viz., in 1784.

Excursion's Poems. If he had had his reputation raised by some less important and more popular poems, it would have insured him pretty critics a different reception to his *Lyrical Ballads*, and *Evening Walk*—(p. 590.)

While James in Denbighshire he doubtless often discussed his future prospects. In the beginning of the following year he left Wales, and we find him first as he went to Armaghwaite, near Keswick, living with the Spensers. In February he went to the Rawsons, at Mill House, Halifax. Mrs Rawson was the Miss Thelkeld, to whose care his sister Dorothy had been handed over after she left Penrith; and it was partly to meet his sister, and discuss their prospects, that he went to Halifax, where he spent four weeks. While at Mill House he gave Mr Ewart's nephew lessons in French.

In a letter to Mathews, February 17th, 1794, Wordsworth says: "My sister is under the same roof with me; indeed it was to see her that I came into this country. I have been doing nothing, and still continue to do nothing. What is to become of me I know not." He adds that he has determined not to enter the Church; and, "as for the Law, I have neither strength of mind, purse, or constitution, to engage in that pursuit."*

In this state of suspense as to his future, the brother and sister started on one of those delightful walks,—so many of which they afterwards took together,—partly to talk over their future, partly to visit friends with whom they might further discuss it, partly to see if they could find a fit spot where they might settle down. Their mode of travelling was delightfully simple and unencumbered. They took coach, in the first instance, from Halifax to Kendal, there com-

* See *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 82. His three brothers had all made up their minds as to their future long before William could make up his. He was now twenty-three years of age.

menced their walk, and they went on foot to Grasmere, from Grasmere to Keswick, from Keswick to Cockermouth, and from Cockermouth to Whitehaven.

Of this tour his sister wrote thus to a friend: "After having enjoyed the company of my brother William at Halifax, we set forward by coach towards Whitehaven, and thence to Kendal. I walked with my brother at my side, from Kendal to Grasmere, eighteen miles, and afterwards from Grasmere to Keswick, fifteen miles, through the most delightful country that was ever seen. We are now at a farmhouse, about half a mile from Keswick. When I came, I intended to stay only a few days; but the country is so delightful, and, above all, I have so full an enjoyment of my brother's company, that I have determined to stay a few weeks longer. After I leave Windybrow" (this is the name of the farm-house), "I shall proceed to Whitehaven."*

Again to Miss Pollard, from the same place, she gives details of their life, and describes the Keswick scenery. William Calvert had evidently told them they might remain at Windybrow, till there appeared some definite prospect of remunerative work. Windybrow farm was on the flank of Latrigg, under Skiddaw.

"WINDY BROW, near KESWICK [1794].

"Since I wrote to — I walked from Grasmere to Keswick, 13 miles, and at Keswick I still remain. I have been so much delighted with the people of this house, with its situation, with the cheapness of living, and above all with the opportunity which I have of enjoying my brother's company, that although on my arrival I only talked of staying a few days, I have already been here above a fortnight, and intend staying still a few weeks longer, perhaps three or four. You cannot conceive anything more delightful than the situation

* See *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 82.

of this house. It stands upon the top of a very steep bank, which rises in a direction nearly perpendicular from a dashing stream below. From the window of the room where I write, I have a prospect of the wood winding along the opposite banks of this river, of a part of the Lake of Keswick and the town, and towering above the town a woody steep of a very considerable height, whose summit is a long range of silver rocks. This is the view from the house, but a hundred yards above it is impossible to describe its grandeur. There is a natural terrace along the side of the mountain, which shelters Windybrow, whence we command a view of the whole vale of Keswick (the Vale of Elysium, as Mr Gray calls it). This vale is terminated at one end by a huge pile of grand mountains, in whose lap the lovely lake of Derwent is placed; at the other end by the lake of Bassenthwaite, on one side of which Skiddaw towers sublime, and on the other a range of mountains, not of equal size, but of much grandeur; and the middle part of the vale is of beautiful cultivated grounds, interspersed with cottages, and watered by a winding stream which runs between the Lakes of Derwent and Bassenthwaite. I have never been more delighted with the manners of any people than of the family under whose roof I am at present. They are the most honest, sensible people I ever saw in their rank of life, and I think I may safely affirm, happier than anybody I know. They are contented with a supply of the bare necessities of life, are active and industrious, and declare with simple frankness, unmixed with ostentation, that they prefer their cottage at Windy Brow to any of the showy edifices in the neighbourhood, and they believe that there is not to be found in the whole vale a happier family than they are. They are fond of reading, and reason not indifferently on what they read. We have a neat parlour to ourselves, which Mr Calvert has fitted up for his own

use, and the lodging-rooms are very comfortable. Till my brother gets some employment he will lodge here. Mr Calvert is not now at Windy Brow, as you will suppose. We please ourselves in calculating from our present expenses for how very small a sum we could live. We find our own food. Our breakfast and supper are of milk, and our dinner chiefly of potatoes, and we drink no tea. We have received great civilities from many very pleasant families, particularly from a Mr Spedding of Armathwaite, at whose house you may recollect my brother was staying before he went to Halifax. Mr Spedding has two daughters, who are in every respect charming women. . . . They live in the most delightful place that ever was beheld. We have been staying there three nights. . . . William is very intimate with the eldest son."

Nothing being determined as to their future, they left Keswick in May, and went by Cockermouth to Whitehaven, on a visit to their uncle, Richard Wordsworth. There the idea of some conjoint literary labour with Mathews in London took definite shape, and Wordsworth proposed to him that they should start a Monthly Magazine, literary and political, in which "he would communicate critical remarks on poetry, the arts of painting, gardening, &c., besides essays on morals and politics." "I am at present," he adds, "nearly at leisure—I say *nearly*, for I am *not quite* so, as I am correcting, and considerably adding to, those poems which I published in your absence.* It was with great reluctance that I sent those two little works into the world in so imperfect a state. But as I had done nothing by which to distinguish myself at the university, I thought these little things might show that I *could* do something. They have been treated with unmerited contempt by some of the

* *The Evening Walk and Descriptive Sketches.*

periodicals, and others have spoken in higher terms of them than they deserve."

This letter is interesting as a sign of his own dissatisfaction with his youthful poems.

Next month—June 1794—writing from the same place, he forwarded to Mathews a prospectus of the proposed Magazine, which he suggested should be called "The PHILANTHROPIST, a monthly Miscellany." In politics it was to be republican, but not revolutionary.*

This project failed, as well it might. Mathews was already a journalist; but no wise publisher would have started a new Magazine, and entrusted it to the care of a couple of adventurers, one of them a raw recruit in journalism seeking a sphere, but wholly unpractised in the art of writing for the press. It is interesting, however, to note, that in the prospectus sent up to Mathews, Wordsworth proposed to popularize the magazine by criticisms on gardening, as well as poetry and art. He knew the principles of landscape gardening well; as the grounds of Rydal, Foxhow, Hallsteads, and, above all, the winter garden at Coleorton abundantly attest.

His relatives soon began to be more than disappointed that he could not find a sphere of work. They knew, and had daily evidence of his ability; but they thought that he had been recently wasting his time.

Before returning to William Calvert's house at Windybrow, he must have wandered on foot alone, or with his sister, over other parts of Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire, during that autumn of 1794. I think there is evidence that he crossed from Whitehaven to the Isle of Man, and remained there for a month.

"I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile!

Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee," †

he says in the *Stanzas suggested by a picture of Peele*

* See *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 83.

† See vol. iii. p. 45.

castle in a storm. There is no subsequent year in which that month can be placed so fittingly as this one.

No record of these wanderings survives ; but in the tenth book of *The Prelude*, he tells us he was crossing the Ulverston sands when he heard the news of the fall of Robespierre. Robespierre was guillotined on the 28th of July, and it must have been on one of the early days of August that he had gone, probably after a visit to Hawkshead, to see the grave of his old master in the grammar school, William Taylor, who had died eight years before, and was buried at Cartmell. At Ulverston, the tide being out, the customary crowd of travellers, on foot and in carriages, was crossing the sands ; and while Wordsworth paused in admiration of the sight, the foremost of the band advancing cried out, "Robespierre is dead." So great was his joy, that he poured forth what he called a "hymn of triumph."

It was during this autumn that a reaction set in, and developed itself, in Wordsworth's mind, against the democratic movement in France with which, in 1792, he had been in fullest sympathy. The whole process is traced for us, with singular felicity of autobiographical analysis, in the eleventh book of *The Prelude*. It is done so well, that it is at least possible that future students of the period will have more interest—they will have some difficulty—in tracing out the numerous allusions, in those condensed pages of *The Prelude*, to the passing events of the time, than in searching for the facts in the journals of the day. He still believed that the fresh intuitions of his youth (which were in sympathy with the radical movement) were truer, or at least a more trustworthy guide to him, than the prosaic counsels of conservative tradition. He lamented the policy of the government of the day, inspired by a fear of revolution in England.* But, pondering the large question of

* See Note, vol. iii. p. 350.

"the rule and management of nations,"—whether their prosperity hinges altogether on their laws,—he saw cause to modify some of the opinions he had embraced at the dawn of the revolutionary movement in France.

Mathews gave him no encouragement in the notion of their starting a monthly Magazine together, but told his friend that if he came up to town he would easily get work on the metropolitan press. He seems to have made up his mind at last, that it would be the best thing for him to make such a venture; and, on the 7th November 1794, having returned to his friend Calvert's house at Windybrow, Keswick, he writes to Mathews:—"You say a newspaper would be glad of me. Do you think you could insure me employment in that way, on terms similar to your own? I mean, also, in an Opposition Paper, for I cannot abet, in the smallest degree, the measures pursued by the present ministry. They are already so deeply advanced in iniquity, that, like Macbeth, they cannot retreat. When I express myself in this manner, I am far from reprobating those whose sentiments differ from my own; I know that many good men are persuaded of the expediency of the present war. . . . You would probably see that my brother* has been honoured with two college declamation prizes. This goes towards a fellowship, which I hope he will obtain, and am sure he will merit. He is a lad of talents, and industrious withal. This same industry is a good old Roman quality, and nothing is to be done without it."†

The notion that he might become a journalist was not seriously entertained by Wordsworth; or, if the idea ever crossed the horizon of his mind as a possibility, a true instinct led him to abandon it, as soon as the means

* Christopher, then an under-graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge.

† See *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 85.

of frugal livelihood were otherwise within his reach. He wrote slowly, and disliked the task of writing at all. How he afterwards came to write so many letters to so many friends—and some of them of such length and elaborateness—is a mystery to those who know his intense aversion to the physical labour of correspondence. To sit down before a writing desk was to him like taking a seat on a penance-stool. Then his prose style—though at times rising to heights of austere beauty, even of grandeur, and incisive power—was, as a rule, heavy and dull; sometimes indeed it was exceedingly commonplace. It lacked the sparkle, the terseness, the verve, the light touch, and the humour that are the requisites of a good newspaper style.

It is curious to speculate on the kind of Wordsworth the world would have had, if, by stress of circumstances, he had devoted himself, even for a few years, to the miscellaneous vocation of a pressman, and toiled as Samuel Taylor Coleridge did. Poems, wrung with new intensity from the wine-press of experience, and with some wilder ethereal flights? Perhaps. It is impossible to say. In any case I believe he would have kept himself well in hand. We should have had nothing of Burns's experience, or of Byron's to record.

The mention of Burns recalls a supposed meeting of the two bards, suggested by a poet and literary critic of our time, whose name need not be given. The two men meet, at a time and place when conviviality was most natural, and pledge each other with enthusiasm, but with due sobriety, when Burns is supposed to rise, and ask the bard of Rydal to

“Tak a cup o’ kindness yet
For auld langsyne.”

To whom Wordsworth, replying, says, “Mr Burns, don’t you think we’ve had enough!”

Waiting on at Keswick for a reply from Mathews, he

had a sad duty to discharge. Raisley Calvert, the brother of the friend with whom he had travelled in the Isle of Wight, and at whose house he and his sister were guests, had long been delicate. Symptoms of pulmonary disease now showed themselves. Even when writing to Mathews about going up to Town, Wordsworth had said, "I cannot think of quitting him in his present debilitated state." Two months later, writing from Penrith (January 7, 1795), he says: "I have been here for some time. I am still much engaged with my sick friend, and sorry am I to add that he worsens daily. . . . He is barely alive." Soon afterwards Raisley Calvert died. In his will it was found that he had left the sum of £900 to the friend who had nursed him in his illness. This he did, not only as a mark of personal friendship, but because he believed that, if Wordsworth were only free from the pressure of monetary cares, he would write something, in verse or prose, that would benefit the world.

Wordsworth's gratitude to his friend prompted the sonnet beginning

"Calvert! it must not be unheard by them,"*

and a passage in the fourteenth book of *The Prelude*, beginning

. . . "A youth,—he bore
The name of Calvert."† . . .

It was William, not Raisley Calvert, who was Wordsworth's special friend. They were sons of R. Calvert, steward to the Duke of Norfolk. But Raisley knew the difficulty in which his brother's friend was placed, as to finding the means of livelihood. He had doubtless heard the question often discussed by his brother and sisters, and

* See vol. iv., p. 40 and note.

† See vol. iii., p. 400.

by Dorothy Wordsworth; and having the tact to appreciate the genius of his brother's friend, and feeling that his own tenure of life was to be a short one, he generously devised this legacy, on public as well as personal grounds. He had mentioned to Wordsworth himself—a month before the latter wrote to Mathews (asking him to procure a post for him in the metropolitan press)—his intention to leave him a legacy, but he then spoke of £600. Wordsworth wrote to William Calvert, October 1, 1794, that Raisley meant to set out for the winter to Lisbon, and that he (Wordsworth) had a desire to accompany him, as he was too weak to go alone; adding that he had bequeathed all his property to William, with the exception of this legacy of £600. The legacy was to be subject to one condition: that on enquiry into the state of the Wordsworth family affairs in London (doubtless corresponding with Richard, the solicitor, and with Mr Cookson at Windsor), it should seem "advisable to do so." The result of Raisley's enquiries must have been to shew him that it was specially advisable, for he left, not £600, but £900. He did not live to visit Lisbon.

Those who are familiar with the Life of Spinoza, will remember that when Simon de Vries of Amsterdam was dying—of the same malady that carried off Raisley Calvert—he offered his friend a gift of 2000 florins, just to mark the intellectual debt he owed him, and to add a little to his comfort. Spinoza, accustomed to the most frugal mode of life, declined what would have been a burden rather than a comfort to him. De Vries then made a will, in which he left all his fortune to Spinoza. Spinoza hearing of this, at once visited de Vries, and remonstrated, reminding him that he had a brother, to whom his fortune would, in course of nature, descend. De Vries consented, only stipulating that his brother should pay a small annuity to Spinoza.

This incident has a curious parallel in Calvert's gift to Wordsworth.

Wordsworth's sonnet to the memory of Calvert records his own feelings, and is a tribute to his friend's character. In a letter to Sir George Beaumont in 1805, he gives an account of the gift, and of the use he made of it. The following is part of that letter:—

“GRASMERE, *Feb.* 20th, 1805.

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—My father, who was an attorney of considerable eminence, died intestate, when we were children: and the chief part of his personal property after his decease was expended in an unsuccessful attempt to compel the late Lord Lonsdale to pay a debt of about £5000 to my father's estate. Enough, however, was scraped together to educate us all in different ways. I, the second son, was sent to college with a view to the profession of the church or law; into one of which I should have been forced by necessity, had not a friend left me £900. This bequest was from a young man with whom, though I call him friend, I had had but little connection; and the act was done entirely from a confidence on his part that I had powers and attainments which might be of use to mankind. This I have mentioned, because it was his due, and I thought the fact would give you pleasure. Upon the interest of the £900, £400 being laid out in annuity, with £200 deducted from the principal, and £100 a legacy to my sister, and £100 more which the “*Lyrical Ballads*” have brought me, my sister and I contrived to live seven years, nearly eight. Lord Lonsdale then died, and the present Lord Lowther paid to my father's estate £8500. Of this sum I believe £1800 apiece will come to my sister and myself; at least, would have come: but £3000 was lent out to our poor

brother,* I mean taken from the whole sum, which was about £1200 more than his share, which £1200 belonged to my sister and me. This £1200 we freely lent him: whether it was insured or no, I do not know; but I dare say it will prove to be the case; we did not however stipulate for its being insured. But you shall faithfully know all particulars as soon as I have learned them."

His course in life was now made clear to him. He gave up the search for a "profession." Calvert's legacy had cleared a passage for him, and now allowed the stream of his ambition to flow as natural instinct led it.† By dint of strictest economy—to him, as to Spinoza, a luxury—and by joining his sister, and throwing their small means into a common fund, he had enough to live upon; while he devoted his future solely to that office to which he had been "dedicated" in his eighteenth year, during the Hawkshead "morning walk."

And now began what was certainly the most powerful influence over him, if not the most important event in his life—that fellowship with his Sister, which lasted, with scarcely an interval, for fifty-five years, till his death in 1850.

Hitherto Wordsworth had lived much alone. He had companions, familiar ones; but none of the Hawkshead boys, and neither Jones, nor Mathews, nor Beaupuis, nor Calvert were friends in an *intimate* sense. The ties to his brothers and sister were not, as yet, specially close. "Home" had been a name to him, not an experience; he speaks of having led "an undomestic wanderer's life."‡ And a somewhat stern element had developed in his character, as he himself

* John Wordsworth.

† See *The Prelude*, book xiv., vol. iii. p. 400.

‡ *The Prelude*, book xiv., vol. iii. p. 400.

confesses, and as his sister points out in her letters from Fornsett.

The effect of his sister's influence over him, the education it was, and its "healing power," have been gratefully recorded by himself. This "blessing of his later years," he tells us, was "with him when a boy."

"She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
And humble cares, and delicate fears ;
A heart—the fountain of sweet tears—
And love, and thought, and joy." *

But alone at Hawkshead, alone at Cambridge, alone in France, he was deprived of its steady influence, its staying power ; and the result was—

"I too exclusively esteemed that love,
And sought that beauty, which (as Milton sings)
Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down
This over-sternness." †

He says that, but for the influence of his sister, the self-confidence of his nature would have kept him like

"A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
Familiar, and a favourite of the stars :
But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
And teach the little birds to build their nests
And warble in its chambers." †

More than this, in that autobiographic analysis of himself, and of the state of mind he passed through in France, and on his return to England, which is given in the eleventh book of *The Prelude*—in the period of unsettlement that ensued, when the scrutinising intellect was at work, and he lost all sense of conviction, and gave up moral problems in despair, and was on the verge of becoming like "the

* See vol. ii., p. 207.

† See *The Prelude*, book xiv., vol. iii. p. 396.

Solitary," whom he afterwards described in *The Excursion*—then it was that, travelling together on foot in the Yorkshire dales, and Cumbrian valleys, his sister brought him back from what was almost misanthropy, corrected his despondency, and, (as he put it,)

"Maintained for me a saving intercourse
With my true self ;
She whispered still that brightness would return,
She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
And that alone, my office upon earth." *

Elsewhere he writes of her—

"Her voice was like a hidden brook that sang ;
The thought of her was like a flash of light,
Or an unseen companionship." †

Again—

"Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,
Could they have known her, would have loved ; methought
Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
And everything she looked on, should have had
An intimation how she bore herself
Towards them, and to all creatures." ‡

It was a process of gradual development. Nothing in Wordsworth's life was sudden or abrupt. By degrees he learned that "peace settles where the intellect is meek," and the renewed influence of Nature's voice, along with that of his Sister

"led him back through opening day
To those sweet counsels between head and heart
Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with peace." §

* *The Prelude*, book xi. See vol. iii. p. 359.

† *The Recluse*, book i. MS.

‡ *The Prelude*, book xii. See vol. iii. p. 369.

§ *The Prelude*, book xi. See vol. iii. p. 360.

No poet was ever so happy in the unselfish ministry of a sister. From Chaucer downwards we meet with none in the records of English literature who was so fortunate in the devotion and the service of the women who surrounded him.

This devotion, however,—with all its unselfish tenderness,—would not have done so much for Wordsworth as it did, had it not been accompanied by that wonderful insight which Dorothy possessed. She had quite as clear and delicate a perception as her brother had of those rarer beauties of Nature which the common eye sees not. Abundant evidence will be found in the passages to be extracted from the Journals she wrote at Alfoxden and Grasmere of that intellectual second-sight—that knowledge born of love—which made both brother and sister poets. It was the insight and the service combined that made her so invaluable to Wordsworth.

The very service, however, had its hurtful side. We shall see signs of self-involution by-and-by, which it fostered. Wordsworth had so much done for him, his reading, his writing, his copying, the sister working in every sort of way that could contribute to his ease, that a certain element, not of selfishness—he never showed signs of that—but of self-engrossedness and self-centredness arose, almost as a matter of course. Even this was akin to a virtue, but the rootedness it gave to his character took away something of the charm, and almost of necessity lessened the benignity and radiance, which we find in natures less robust and strong. For another thing, it led him to individualize a great deal in his writings, to occupy himself with minute objects, incidents, and themes, rather than to generalize, and deal with large questions and national interests.

Where Wordsworth passed the summer of 1795 we do

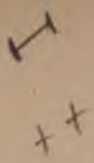
not exactly know. Part of his time would doubtless be spent at Penrith, but it is more than probable that he accompanied his sister to Halifax, and then went up to town. He would wish to see William Calvert, and we know that Mr Basil Montagu, Q.C., had some personal communications with him during the autumn; while his sister writes, in September, of William's "unsettled" life being unfavourable to mental work. Another evidence that he spent this autumn in London is that the Mr Pinney of Bristol, who gave him his first home in Dorsetshire, was a friend of Basil Montagu's. Most probably it was Montagu who introduced him to Pinney, and sent him down to Bristol to see if he could not there make a start in taking pupils. What led him to make Racedown, in Dorsetshire, his home in the autumn of 1795, is detailed in one of his sister's letters to Miss Pollard, who had just been married to Mr Marshall of Leeds. Her brother had gone to Bristol, and was staying with Mr Pinnëy, a local merchant there, who had a country house at Racedown, Dorsetshire. Mr Pinney had given over this house to his son. The son offered it, furnished, with orchard, garden, &c., to Wordsworth, rent free, apparently on the sole condition that he (Mr Pinney, jr.) should occasionally come down and stay for a few weeks. Wordsworth at the same time had another important offer from Mr Montagu, viz., to take charge of his boy Basil, for which Montagu offered him £50 a year for board. He hoped to have the son of Mr Pinney, aged 13, as a second pupil, while Dorothy was asked to take charge of a cousin's child, a girl of three and a half years.

The following is an extract from his sister's letter:—

MILLHOUSE, *September 2nd, 1795.*

[On the back of the letter, in Lady Monteagle's handwriting, the year is given as 1796; but it was 1795.

Miss Pollard was now Mrs Marshall. She speaks of a visit of Kit's before going up to Cambridge for his final term before graduating, and adds,] "He is very like me! It is allowed by every one, and I myself think I never saw a stronger likeness. . . . I am going to live in Dorsetshire. . . . You know the pleasure I have always attached to the idea of home, a blessing which I have so early lost. . . . I think I told you that Mr Montagu had a little boy, who, as you will perceive, could not be very well taken care of, either in his father's chambers, or under the uncertain management of various friends of Mr M., with whom he has frequently stayed. . . . A daughter of Mr Tom Myers (a cousin of mine whom I daresay you have heard me mention) is coming over to England by the first ship, which is expected in about a week, to be educated. She is, I believe, about three or four years old, and T. Myers' brother, who has charge of her, has suggested that I should take her under my care. With these two children, and the produce of Raisley Calvert's legacy, we shall have an income of at least £70 or £80 per annum. William finds that he can get nine per cent. for the money upon the best security. He means to sink half of it upon my life, which will make me always comfortable and independent. . . . Living in the unsettled way in which my brother has hitherto lived in London is altogether unfavourable to mental exertion. . . . He has had the offer of ten guineas for a work which has not taken up much time, and half the profits of a second edition if it should be called for. It is a little sum; but it is one step. . . . I am determined to work with resolution. . . . It will greatly contribute to my happiness, and place me in such a situation that I shall be doing something. . . . I shall have to join William at Bristol, and proceed thence in a chaise with Basil to Race-down. It is fifty miles."



CHAPTER VII.

FIRST HOME AT RACEDOWN.

IN this Racedown house, half way between Crewkerne in Somersetshire, and Lyme in Dorsetshire, Wordsworth began, what was to continue till his death, the one supreme object of his life. The following is a description of the house as seen in the summer of 1887 :—

“ We approached the old farm-house over meadows bright with yellow iris and foxglove, and through lanes lined with fern, and hung with honeysuckle and wild rose. Large beech trees shade the entrance gate; the house and its clustering farm buildings stands on the slope of Blackdown; open grass fields surround it. From the terrace garden on the left hand side of the house, wide views of hill and valley are obtained. Below, amongst meadows famous for daffodils, winds Cindreford Brook. The hollow is well wooded, the remains of an avenue of Scotch firs being a prominent feature. On the opposite side of the valley rises Greggry, with quaint clumps of fir trees on the ridge of the hill; beyond, a glimpse of Lambert’s Castle is to be had, and of another hill locally known as Goldencap, from the brilliance of the gorse in bloom, which is said to serve as a beacon to ships. The sea itself is visible from the top of the house, and its reviving breezes may be felt in the garden. The house, built of dull red brick, covered in front with grey stucco and much weather-stained, is three stories high, and has no beauty beyond that of situation and association. A porch, added recently, opens into a fairly wide and airy hall, with

old-fashioned fleet staircase. The room on the right hand, looking out to the grass fields in front and to the large beeches at the entrance gate, is the one Wordsworth occupied. It is square and low, with two deep recesses and a high ornamented plaster ceiling; a small room over the hall is said to have been used as a study by the poet."

Here, in this farm-house, well stocked with books, William and Dorothy Wordsworth began their life of closely associated labour. They spent their time industriously in reading—"if reading," Wordsworth said to Mathews,* "can ever deserve the name of industry"—in writing, and in gardening. Wordsworth tells Mathews that he had begun to read Ariosto with his sister; and she, writing to Mrs Marshall, says that her "brother handles the spade with great dexterity." They had no society to distract them, and the post brought them letters only once a week. Four years later—after they had experience of Alfoxden, and of Germany—Dorothy spoke of Racedown as "the place dearest to my recollections upon the whole surface of the island; it was the first *home* I had;" and she writes of the "lovely meadows above the tops of the coombs, and the scenery on Pilsden, Lewisden, and Blackdown-hill, and the view of the sea from Lambert's Castle."†

Strange to say, the first thing Wordsworth seems to have done at Racedown was to make experimental essays at both Satire and Tragedy, the two kinds of poetical composition in which he was least of all fitted to excel. He began by certain imitations of Juvenal, which he sent to his friend Wrangham, on the 20th November 1795. The two had thought of publishing a joint volume of satirical pieces, and Wordsworth worked at it till the spring of 1796. Perhaps it was to this that his sister refers in

* In a letter dated March 21, 1796.

† See *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 94.

her letter to Mrs Marshall, September 21, 1795, as a work that "has not taken up much time," and for which a pecuniary offer had been made to him; but he put it aside. He had the wisdom to see that it was not his function to become a satirist. And when asked, as late as November 7, 1806, to allow these effusions to be printed, he replied:—

"I have long since come to a fixed resolution to steer clear of personal satire; in fact, I never will have anything to do with it, as far as concerns the *private* vices of individuals on any account. With respect to public delinquents or offenders, I will not say the same; though I should be slow to meddle even with these. This is a rule which I have laid down for myself, and shall rigidly adhere to; though I do not in all cases blame those who think and act differently.

"It will therefore follow, that I cannot lend any assistance to your proposed publication. The verses which you have of mine, I should wish to be destroyed; I have no copy of them myself, at least none that I can find. I would most willingly give them up to you, fame, profit, and everything, if I thought either true fame or profit could arise out of them."

In the autumn of 1795 he began, and carried on throughout the whole of that winter at Racedown, the composition of his one tragedy—*The Borderers*—completing it in the summer of 1796. Very likely, as his nephew suggests,* the subject occurred to him during his residence in the Border district,—at Penrith, or at Keswick,—where so many of the ruined castles have traditions which carry us back to the period of the drama in question, viz., in the time of Henry III.; and Wordsworth tells us himself that he had read Redpath's *History of the Borders*, that he might know something of the local history.†

* See *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 96.

† See the Fenwick note to *The Borderers*, vol. i. p. 108.

U- and return to the Tragedy, to see its fate in the
 the 1796

Letter is a time that Dorothy Wordsworth describes
 as the 1796 letter to Mrs Marshall:—

— RACKDOWS, November 30th.*

East is a charming boy. He affords us perpetual
 amusement. Do not suppose from this that we make
 an idle business of it. We walk about two
 miles every morning. We have very pleasant walks about
 the coast. The roads are of a sandy
 and the sea is always by. We can see the sea, 150
 feet from the shore, and at a little distance we
 see the hills terminated by the sea, seen
 through the valleys of the unequal hills. We have
 the view and appearance of Devonshire, though there
 is no wood or cultivation; but the trees
 grow in the sandhills. We have hills which,
 though they do not make the character of mountains,
 are very high and steep to their summits; others in their
 appearance are like fern and broom. These delight
 us as much as the finest of our native wilds. Our
 house is the finest little room that can be." ...
 The house is about seven miles from Crewkerne,
 about five miles from Axminster, Bridport, and
 about one mile from the coast which runs at the distance of one
 mile from Devonshire." [She adds that
 their cottages "shapeless
 and very low and dry." "they are not at all beyond
 the range of savage life."]

* The letter is in the possession of this, and all the other letters from
 Dorothy Wordsworth to Mrs Marshall are, has written 1796 upon it, but I
 do not know how to find it.

Again Miss Wordsworth writes to Mrs Marshall, as follows :—

“RACEDOWN, Sunday Night.

“You ask to be informed of our system respecting Basil. It is a very simple one, so simple that, in this age of systems, you will hardly be likely to follow it. We teach him nothing at present, but what he learns from the evidence of his senses. He has an insatiable curiosity, which we are always careful to satisfy. It is directed to everything.” . . . [At first disposed to be fretful, he was told that crying was not allowed in this house ; and that it must go on in a certain room, if at all ; at first his visits to this room were very long, but he always came out perfectly good humoured. He found that this mode of treatment was never departed from ; and so there was little need to send him into this “apartment of tears.”]

“Mary Hutchinson is staying with us. She is one of the best girls in the world, and we are as happy as human beings can be, that is when William is at home ; for you cannot imagine how dull we feel when he is away. . . . He is the life of the whole house.”

Again she writes to Mrs Marshall, giving an account of the Pinneys' visit to Racedown, speaks of their being out walking, riding, hunting, clearing and carving wood, “which is a very desirable employment, and could be recommended to all” . . . “William is going to publish a poem. The Pinneys have taken it to the bookseller. I am studying Italian very hard.”

The poem referred to may have been *Guilt and Sorrow* ; but more probably it was his tragedy, *The Borderers*.

It was in the early spring of 1796, I think, that Wordsworth went in to Bristol to see Coleridge ; and there it was,

in No. 25 College Street (the house is at present numbered 51,) that these two remarkable men first met.

Wordsworth wrote to his friend Mathews,* "I am going to Bristol to-morrow to see there two extraordinary youths, Coleridge and Southey."

In March 1796, Coleridge notes that he had met Wordsworth, and in a list of authors with whom he was acquainted, which Coleridge drew up in March 1796, Wordsworth's name is to be found.†

It is curious, however, that over the first meeting of these two men—whose relations to each other were afterwards so close and significant—there should be some obscurity. In October 1795 Coleridge was married, and went to the cottage at Clevedon. There, in the earliest months of his married life, he prepared for the press his first volume of *Poems*, which was published in April 1796. He then busied himself with the editing of *The Watchman*, the first number of which appeared on 1st March, and the tenth (the final one) on May 14, 1796. His misunderstanding with Southey occurred in the beginning of 1796. He was full of the excitement of launching *The Watchman*, when he first made Wordsworth's acquaintance, whose name occurs amongst those to whom he asked Cottle to send a copy of his poems in April 1796.‡ He afterwards went down to Racedown to return Wordsworth's visit, but the precise date of his first arrival at Racedown is unknown. Probably, during that summer and autumn of 1796, there were several interchanges of visits. But in the following

* See Gilman's *Life of Coleridge*, p. 74.

† But in an MS. note to a copy of the second edition of his own *Poems* (1797) Coleridge says that the note "was written before I had ever seen Mr Wordsworth." I am inclined to doubt the accuracy of Coleridge's memory in this instance. The note, which is in a copy of the *Poems* belonging to Mr Locker Lampson, was probably written late in Coleridge's life.

‡ See *Biographia Literaria*, vol. ii. p. 363.

June, Coleridge, who had gone to live at Nether Stowey in January of the same year,* went to Dorsetshire and stayed some time at Racedown; and the Wordsworths paid a return visit to Stowey in July.

The following letter—written by Mrs Wordsworth to Sara Coleridge, in November 7, 1845, is a further illustration of the difficulty of ‘determining’ these dates:—

“ With my husband’s tender love to you, he bids me say, in reply to a question you have put to him through Miss Fenwick, that he has not as distinct a remembrance as he could wish, of the time when he first saw your father and your uncle Southey, but the impression upon his mind is, that he first saw them both, and your aunt Edith at the same time, in a lodging in Bristol; this must have been about the year 1795.† Your father, he says, came afterwards to see us at Racedown, where I was then living with my sister. We have both a distinct remembrance of his arrival. He did not keep to the high road, but leapt over a gate and bounded down the pathless field, by which he cut off an angle. We both retain the liveliest possible image of his appearance at that moment. My poor sister has just been speaking of it to me with much feeling and tenderness.—Ever, dear Sara, most affectionately yours,

“ M. WORDSWORTH.”

Dorothy Wordsworth’s description of Coleridge as she first met him is worthy of special notice, as is Coleridge’s of her; their friendship subsequently assuming such a tender edge and intensity.

“ You had a great loss,” she writes to a friend,‡ who had

* See *Biog. Lit.*, vol. ii.; *Biog. Suppl.*, p. 391.

† It was evidently 1796.

‡ See *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 99. It is a pity that the Bishop of Lincoln withheld her name. Was it Mary Hutchinson?

left Racedown early in 1797, "in not seeing Coleridge. He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful, and, like William, interests himself so much about every little trifle. At first I thought him very plain, that is, for about three minutes. He is pale, thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish, loose-growing, half-curling, rough, black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark, but grey, such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind: it has more of 'the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling' than I ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows, and an overhanging forehead:

"The first thing that was read after he came was William's new poem, 'The Ruined Cottage,' with which he was much delighted; and after tea he repeated to us two acts and a half of his tragedy, 'Osorio.' The next morning William read his tragedy, 'The Borderers.'"

In Cottle's *Early Recollections** of Coleridge, an account of this visit will be found written by Coleridge to Cottle, in June 1797. "I am sojourning for a few days," he says, "at Racedown, Dorset, the mansion of our friend Wordsworth. . . . Wordsworth admires my tragedy, which gives me great hopes. He has written a tragedy himself. I speak with heartfelt sincerity, and, I think, unblinded judgment, when I tell you that I feel myself a little man by his side."

When the Wordsworths returned this visit and went to Nether Stowey in July, Coleridge wrote again to Cottle: "W. and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman

* See vol. i. p. 250, &c.

indeed ! in mind I mean, and heart ; for her person is such that if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her rather ordinary ; if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty ! but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion her most innocent soul outbeams so brightly, that who saw would say—

‘Guilt was a thing impossible with her.’

Her information various. Her eye watchful in minutest observation of Nature ; and her taste a perfect electrometer. It bends, protrudes, and draws in at subtlest beauties and most recondite faults.” *

Odd stories linger in the gossip of the Dorsetshire farm folk about Wordsworth and Coleridge. They were reported to carry on chemical experiments, and were supposed to be in league with the devil ; and the Racedown household was exposed in consequence to some boycotting. There is a story too of Wordsworth borrowing a horse from a farmer near by. After riding to Lyme, and putting up the horse at the Three Cups Inn, he forgot all about it, and walked back to Racedown, about eight miles. Inquiry being made for the horse on his return, he stoutly protested that he had had none ! This, however, may be mere local gossip.

* See “Cottle’s *Early Recollections*, vol. i., p. 252.

CHAPTER VIII.

ALFOXDEN : COLERIDGE : THE LYRICAL BALLADS.

ON the 13th of July 1797, William and Dorothy Wordsworth took up their residence at Alfoxden. During that month we already found them visiting the Coleridges in their cottage at Nether Stowey. They reached it on the evening of the 3rd July, and Dorothy, writing on the 4th,* thus describes her first visit to the district of the Quantocks :—

“There is everything here; sea, woods wild as fancy ever painted, brooks clear and pebbly as in Cumberland, villages so romantic; and William and I, in a wander by ourselves, found out a sequestered waterfall in a dell formed by steep hills covered with full-grown timber trees. The woods are as fine as those at Lowther, and the country more romantic; it has the character of the less grand parts of the neighbourhood of the lakes.”

The waterfall referred to is the small cascade in the Alfoxden dell, a bowshot from the house, to which so many future visits were paid by themselves and Coleridge. They found that the mansion of Alfoxden, belonging to Mrs St Albyn, was to let. Wordsworth applied for it, and got it on lease. They do not seem to have returned to Racedown, but to have transferred themselves from Stowey to Alfoxden nine days after they first saw the old mansion-house. Miss Wordsworth gives the following account of their new abode, a month after they entered it :—

* See *Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 102.

"ALFOXDEN NEAR NETHER-STOWEY, SOMERSETSHIRE,
August 14, 1797.

"Here we are in a large mansion, in a large park, with seventy head of deer around us. But I must begin with the day of leaving Racedown to pay Coleridge a visit. You know how much we were delighted with the neighbourhood of Stowey. . . . The evening that I wrote to you,* William and I had rambled as far as this house, and pryed into the recesses of our little brook, but without any more fixed thoughts upon it than some dreams of happiness in a little cottage, and passing wishes that such a place might be found out. We spent a fortnight at Coleridge's: in the course of that time we heard that this house was to let, applied for it, and took it. Our principal inducement was Coleridge's society. It was a month yesterday since we came to Alfoxden.

"The house is a large mansion, with furniture enough for a dozen families like ours. There is a very excellent garden, well stocked with vegetables and fruit. The garden is at the end of the house, and our favourite parlour, as at Racedown, looks that way. In front is a little court, with grass plot, gravel walk, and shrubs; the moss roses were in full beauty a month ago. The front of the house is to the south, but it is screened from the sun by a high hill which rises immediately from it. This hill is beautiful, scattered irregularly and abundantly with trees, and topped with fern, which spreads a considerable way down it. The deer dwell here, and sheep, so that we have a living prospect. From the end of the house we have a view of the sea, over a woody meadow-country; and exactly opposite the window where I now sit is an immense wood, whose round top from this point has exactly the appearance of a mighty dome. In

* July 4th.

some parts of this wood there is an under grove of hollies which are now very beautiful. In a glen at the bottom of the wood is the waterfall of which I spoke, a quarter of a mile from the house. We are three miles from Stowey, and not two miles from the sea. Wherever we turn we have woods, smooth downs, and valleys with small brooks running down them, through green meadows, hardly ever intersected with hedgerows, but scattered over with trees. The hills that cradle these valleys are either covered with fern and bilberries, or oak woods, which are cut for charcoal. . . . Walks extend for miles over the hill-tops; the great beauty of which is their wild simplicity: they are perfectly smooth, without rocks.

"The Tor of Glastonbury is before our eyes during more than half of our walk to Stowey; and in the park wherever we go, keeping about fifteen yards above the house, it makes a part of our prospect."

Alfoxden has been somewhat enlarged since Wordsworth's time, but the view from it is still very much as it was described by Dorothy at the end of last century. The tall larch tree is gone, though its site is easily traced, about twenty yards to the south-east of the house. The glen is not much changed. The "dome" of wood, the hills "topped with fern," the grove of holly, are all as they were; and the garden is the same as of old, surrounded by a lofty wall. There are some very large elms in the grounds, which must have been standing in Wordsworth's time—one in particular, to the north-east, as the ground slopes down to the public road.

It was to be nearer Coleridge that Wordsworth left Racedown; but the circle into which his residence at Alfoxden introduced him, though small, was in many respects a distinguished one. In addition to Coleridge, it included Mr Thomas Poole of Nether Stowey,—a very

remarkable man, and one of the greatest friends Coleridge ever had. Bristol was so near that Southey, Cottle, and others could easily come down. Charles Lloyd lived much with Coleridge, and George Burnet, one of his Pantisocratic friends, was a frequent visitor. Macintosh (afterwards Sir James) used to come, and Bowles, and more important still, Charles Lamb was an occasional guest. In 1793 Bristol was the second city in England, with a population of 100,000 inhabitants, or more than double that of Liverpool. A famous democrat, John Thelwall, who had recently been tried for high treason, lived not far off. In the Fenwick note to the *Anecdote for Fathers*,* Wordsworth says that Thelwall had renounced politics, and lived at Liswyn Farm, a beautiful spot on the Wye, where he had taken to agriculture, although with no greater success than he achieved in politics. He also tells us that he and his sister, along with Coleridge, had visited Thelwall at his place on the Wye. But, although the Fenwick note is ambiguous, it must have been before this visit to Liswyn that Wordsworth made Thelwall's acquaintance. Thelwall seems to have been a visitor at Stowey on the 18th July 1797, and from the following passage in a letter to his wife it will be seen that Coleridge went over to Alfoxden very soon after the Wordsworths settled there, on July 11, and that Thelwall, with Mrs Coleridge, followed him thither on the 18th.

"ALFOXDEN, 18th July 1797.†

"But profit and everything else but my Stella and my Babes are now banished from my mind by the enchanting retreat (the Academus of Stowey) from which I write this,

* See vol. i., p. 203.

† Mr Cosens's MSS.

and by the delightful society of Coleridge and of Wordsworth—the present occupier of All fox Den. We have been having a delightful ramble to-day among the plantations, and along a wild romantic dell in these grounds, through which a foaming, rushing, murmuring torrent of water winds its long artless course. There have we—sometime sitting on a tree, sometime wading boot-top deep through the stream, and again stretched on some mossy stone or root of a decayed tree, a literary egotistical triumvirate—passed sentence on the productions and characters of the age—burst forth in poetical flights of enthusiasm, and philosophised our minds into a state of tranquillity which the leaders of nations might enjoy and the residents of cities can never know.”

[He goes on to say that when he arrived at the Stowey cottage on the preceding night he found that Coleridge was at Alfoxden, and that Sara and he joined them before breakfast next morning.]

“Faith, we are a most philosophical party! A large house, with grounds and plantations about it, which Wordsworth has hired, I understand, for a trifle, merely that he might enjoy the society of Coleridge, contains the enthusiastic group, consisting of C. and his Sara, W. and his sister, and myself, without any servant, male or female. An old woman who lives in an adjoining cottage does what is required for our simple wants.

‘Delightful spot! O were my Stella here!’”

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Thelwall was a man of great political talent, and a writer of verse, endowed with considerable poetic insight, withal a gentle soul, though a very outspoken radical. Coleridge writing to Mr Wade in 1797 said of him, “John Thelwall is a very warm-hearted honest man; and, dis-

agreeing as we do in almost every point of religion, of morals, of politics, and philosophy, we like each other uncommonly well." * It is of him that Wordsworth tells the story that, in the Alfoxden glen beside the waterfall, when Coleridge had remarked, "This is a place to reconcile one to all the jarrings and conflicts of the wide world," Thelwall replied, "Nay, to make one forget them altogether." (It may be noted in passing, however, that Coleridge's was the deeper saying of the two.) Thelwall was an honest democrat, but a perfervid and blind defender of the French Revolution, and his visits to Stowey were not specially advantageous to either of the two poets. There can be little doubt that it was their friendship with this radical—the man who had narrowly escaped conviction for high treason, and whom Canning satirized in the *Anti-Jacobin*, "Thelwall! and ye that lecture as ye go"†—that led to their own proceedings being watched, and to Mrs St Albyn refusing to let the Wordsworths remain at Alfoxden longer than one year.

The best of Wordsworth's early Lyrics were written at Alfoxden—*The Thorn*, *The Mad Mother*, *The Night Piece*, *Simon Lee*, *The Last of the Flock*; above all, *Expostulation and Reply*, *The Tables Turned*, the *Lines written in early spring*, beginning—

"I heard a thousand blended notes,"

and the *Address to his Sister*, beginning—

"It is the first mild day of March."

The four last poems were composed in the very dawn of Wordsworth's lyrical genius. The Fenwick notes will be found to cast much light on the poet's life at this time. The old huntsman, *Simon Lee*, lived in the Park.

* See Cottle's *Early Recollections*, vol. i., p. 254.

† One of the "lecturers" was, doubtless, S. T. C.

Probably no district in Britain could have been more perfectly suited for the work that both Wordsworth and Coleridge had at this time to do, than the region of the Quantocks, and the two residences of Alfoxden and Nether Stowey. In an interesting work,* privately printed by the Rev. W. L. Nichols, of Woodlands, Bridgewater (which arose out of a paper read to the Bath Literary Club in 1871), the range of the Quantocks is called "the Oberland of Somersetshire." Mr Nichols says:—

"The chief characteristic of Quantock scenery I venture to designate as Cheerful Beauty. . . . Its breezy summits rise in gentle and graceful undulations, and sink into woody combs of the most romantic beauty, thickly clothed, many of them with scrub oak, and each with its own little stream winding through it; its slopes fringed with gorse and ferns of luxuriant growth, or purple with heather, and abounding everywhere with the whortleberry. . . . The prevalence of the yew and the holly may also be noted; the former is found singly in the woods and hedgerows, or in the churchyards, of which few are without one or more specimens, often of majestic growth and venerable age. The holly is still more abundant, and the fine undergrowth of this tree, like that in the grove at Alfoxden, forms quite a speciality of these woods. . . ."

A bright account of the group that used to gather at Stowey and Alfoxden is given by Cottle, in recording his earliest visit to Stowey in July 1797. T. Poole had driven him over from Bridgewater. Lamb had just left Coleridge's cottage, and gone back to London. Coleridge took Cottle through the house, garden, and orchard, and showed him the path by which he had contrived to connect Poole's grounds with his own. The sequel is best told in Cottle's own

* *The Quantocks and their Associations.*

words: "We approached the 'jasmine harbour,' where, to our gratifying surprise, we found the tripod table laden with delicious bread and cheese, surmounted by a brown mug of the true Taunton ale. We instinctively took our seats; and there must have been some downright witchery in the provision, which surpassed all of its kind; nothing like it in the wide terrene, and one glass of the Taunton settled it to an axiom. While the dappled sunbeams played on our table, through the umbrageous canopy, the very birds seemed to participate in our felicities, and poured forth their selectest anthems. As we sat in our sylvan hall of splendour, a company of the happiest of mortals (T. Poole, C. Lloyd, S. T. Coleridge, and myself), the bright blue heavens, the sporting insects, the balmy zephyrs, the feathered choristers, the sympathy of friends, all augmented the pleasurable to the highest point this side the celestial! Every interstice of our hearts being filled with happiness, as a consequence there was no room for sorrow, exorcised as it now was, and hovering around at unapproachable distance. With our spirits thus entranced, though we might weep at other moments, yet joyance so filled all within and without, that if, at this juncture, tidings had been brought us that an irruption of the ocean had swallowed up all our dear brethren of Pekin, from the pre-occupation of our minds, 'poor things' would have been our only reply, with anguish put off till the morrow."*

Before Wordsworth came to Alfoxden, Coleridge had familiarised himself with these water-headlands of Somersetshire,† the Quantock hills. Some of his best poetic work had already been done before the arrival of his friend, while wandering amongst the coombes or in his cottage at Stowey. He, as well as, perhaps at that time more than Words-

* See *Early Recollections*, vol. i., p. 275-6.

† Quantock is the Keltic name for water-headland.

worth, felt that there was a Divine Life hidden beneath the raiment of the natural world. He had learned this from Plato, and Plotinus; but he got it more especially through the intuition of his own soul in vital contact with external Nature; and it was their community of thought on all the fundamental aspects of the universe—their common love of Nature as thus symbolically interpreted, and their consequent hidden agreement as to the root whence the noblest poetry springs—that brought the two men together more than anything else.* It is a curious circumstance that, while living at Stowey, and in almost daily intercourse with Wordsworth and his sister, Coleridge records the fact that he wished to write a Poem on Man, Nature, and Society—just as Wordsworth planned it out in *The Recluse*—under the symbol of a brook flowing from a hidden source in the uplands to the sea. In addition to this radical tie, Coleridge and the Wordsworths had many other things in common, *e.g.*, their sympathy with animal life, and especially with animal suffering. Coleridge, however, had not till now met with a literary aspirant, whom he could feel in any sense his superior; and he met very few in the course of his life

* Compare the lines of Coleridge in his *Æolian Harp*,

“ And what, if all of animated Nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o’er them sweeps,
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the soul of each and God of all,”

with the well-known passage in Wordsworth’s *Tintern Abbey*,

“ I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :
A Motion and a Spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.”

who were at any single point his equal. He found more than an equal in Wordsworth, in point of insight into Nature, and above all in force of character, self-control, and power of will; although Wordsworth was his inferior in versatility and brilliance. In a letter to Joseph Cottle,* March 8th, 1798, Coleridge says—"The Giant Wordsworth—God love him! When I speak in the terms of admiration due to his intellect, I fear lest these terms should keep out of sight the amiableness of his manners. He has written near twelve hundred lines of blank verse, superior, I hesitate not to aver, to anything in our language which any way resembles it."

Nine years afterwards, in 1807, Coleridge wrote similarly of Wordsworth to Cottle—"He is one whom, God knows, I love and honour as far beyond myself, as both morally and intellectually he is above me."

The closeness of the tie that bound these three poets (Coleridge, William and Dorothy Wordsworth) together, has its best evidence in two things—first, in the Journal which Dorothy kept of their daily life, and of the way in which Nature reveals itself to one who "watches and receives;" and secondly, in the joint work that Wordsworth and Coleridge planned and wrote in these days, viz., *The Lyrical Ballads*.

The origin of the *Lyrical Ballads* has been often told, and readers must refer to vol. i. of this edition, p. 198, for the Fenwick note to *We are Seven*, in which Wordsworth himself tells the story in graphic detail. The first idea was simply to raise £5 to defray the expenses of the few days' tour, which the two poets took to the "Valley of Stones,"—Dorothy Wordsworth accompanying them,—by writing a single poem jointly, and sending it to the *New Monthly Magazine*. Cole-

* See Cottle's *Early Recollections*, vol. i., p. 252.

ridge suggested the Ancient Mariner, founding it on a dream of his friend, Cruikshank.* Wordsworth added a good deal. He had been recently reading about albatrosses, and he suggested that the crime of the "Old Mariner" should be the shooting of an albatross on entering the South Sea, and his being doomed in consequence by the tutelary spirits of the south to wander over the ocean. He also suggested "the navigation of the ship by the dead man." They "began the composition together," and Wordsworth wrote a few of the lines. But, as they went on, differences in their mode of working prevented their making the poem a joint one. The subject did not suit the genius of Wordsworth, nearly so well as it suited Coleridge; and Wordsworth very wisely left to him the working of it out, believing that co-operation would only have been "a clog" to the imagination of his friend. Nothing but the "Ancient Mariner" was thought of during that walk to the Valley of Stones. But on returning to Alfoxden, they planned a *joint volume*, to which each might contribute separately. It was to be a volume of poems, "chiefly on natural subjects taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium." Such is an epitome of Wordsworth's account of the origin of the *Lyrical Ballads*.

Coleridge's account, in the *Biographia Literaria*,† coincides with it. He tells us that he and Wordsworth had often, during that winter at Alfoxden, discussed the essential principles of Poetry, which they thought were an adhesion to the truth of Nature, while adding fresh interest by the work of the imagination; as the glow of sunset or as moonlight give an added charm to a familiar landscape. They thought that,

* Doubtless the Cruikshank referred to in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal. February 26th, 1798. See p. 139.

† Vol. ii., ch. i.

in this fashion, poems might be composed, either when the incidents and agents were supernatural or romantic, or when they belonged to ordinary human life as it is found in every village. It was agreed that he should take the former class of subjects, and, by humanising the stories, give a life and charm to their imaginative setting; while Wordsworth should take the latter, and try to invest the things of everyday life with the charm of novelty, and by breaking up the "lethargy of custom," disclose something of the loveliness of the world and its wonders, which the great majority of persons, from "the film of familiarity," could neither see nor understand. For this purpose he wrote *The Ancient Mariner*, and was preparing the *Dark Ladie* and *Christabel*; but Wordsworth, having been much more industrious, and "the number of his poems so much greater," his (Coleridge's) contributions seemed out of keeping, and of less significance than his friend's.

Wordsworth himself, in the Preface to the second edition of the *Ballads*, when a new volume was added, said that they were published as "an experiment," to ascertain how far the process of throwing into verse "the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation" would result in giving poetic pleasure; and it was his defence of this special theory—that all true poetry consists in the language of real life made vivid by imagination—that, in Coleridge's opinion, made the *Ballads* so long comparatively unpopular. The exposition and defence of a questionable theory of poetry—a theory which was not, by any means, an explanation of the practice on which the poet himself worked—might well retard the sale, and keep back the influence of a wholly new style of poetic production. And Coleridge was right. Had Wordsworth omitted his "Preface," and pruned a few of the ballads of their more trivial phases and stanzas, the "new departure" in our English poetry—which the publication of

that small volume at Bristol in 1798 inaugurated—might have been rapid and continuous.

Wordsworth's Tragedy was written during the winter of 1795-6, after he had settled at Racedown. Coleridge's admiration of it, though sincere, was excessive; and it is just possible that a tendency to "mutual admiration" found a partial outlet in the letter already printed (p. 112). The tragedy was read by many. Coleridge wrote to Poole to come and hear it read, under the trees at Nether Stowey. And he subsequently wrote a letter to Cottle,* making a formal offer of his own and Wordsworth's tragedy to the Bristol publisher. The following is Coleridge's letter:—"I am requested by Wordsworth to put to you the following question—what could you, conveniently and prudently, and what would you give for, first, our two tragedies, with small preface, containing an analysis of the principal characters? (exclusive of the prefaces the tragedies are together five thousand lines, which in printing in the dialogue form, with directions respecting actors and scenery, are at least equal to six thousand). . . . Second, Wordsworth's 'Salisbury Plain' and 'Tale of a Woman,' † which two poems, with a few others which he will add, and the notes, will make a volume." Cottle says he replied to this, offering "Mr Coleridge and Mr Wordsworth thirty guineas each, as proposed, for their two tragedies; but this, after some hesitation, was declined, from the hope of introducing one or both upon the stage. The volume of poems was left for future arrangement." ‡

As the weeks advanced, Coleridge managed, through one of the Messrs Poole, to get *The Borderers* brought under

* See *Early Recollections*, vol. i. p. 298. Cottle gives 1798 as the date, but it evidently belongs to the previous year.

† *The Female Vagrant*.

‡ See *Early Recollections*, vol. i., p. 299.

the notice of the authorities at Covent Garden Theatre. In an undated letter to Cottle, in 1797, he said, "I have procured for Wordsworth's tragedy an introduction to Harris, the manager of Covent Garden, who has promised to read it attentively, and give his answer immediately; and, if he accepts it, to put it in preparation without an hour's delay."* "William's play," wrote Dorothy Wordsworth on the 20th November 1797, "is finished, and sent to the managers of the Covent Garden Theatre. We have not the faintest expectation that it will be accepted."

An actor who read the play, joined in the praise of it, but suggested sundry changes, and asked the writer to come up to London, and adjust these on the spot. So the brother and sister went up, and spent three weeks in town, doubtless staying at Richard Wordsworth's house. Returning to Bristol, Dorothy wrote, on the 21st December, "We have been in London: our business was the play; and the play is rejected. It was sent to one of the principal actors at Covent Garden, who expressed great approbation, and advised William strongly to go to London to make certain alterations. Coleridge's play is also rejected." For the rejection of Coleridge's she expresses great sorrow and disappointment.

Neither his contemporaries nor successors have agreed with Coleridge's eulogy on his friend's drama.† *The Borderers* had no success, and it deserved none. From London Wordsworth wrote to Cottle in Bristol, December 13th, "Mr Harris has pronounced it *impossible* that my play could succeed in the representation," and he admitted that it was by Mr Harris most "*judiciously* returned as not

* See *Early Recollections*, vol. i., p. 251.

† Coleridge's own tragedy had better fortune. It was rejected as *Osorio* in 1797, but in 1813 it was again brought forward as *Remorse*, and had a temporary run on the stage.

calculated for the stage." Wordsworth had no dramatic faculty, not even that of the "dramatic lyric" writer; his *dramatis personæ* were not various enough; and he had the good sense to perceive this, and to admit it. He said, when sending the work to the press in 1842—on the whole it is a pity it was ever published—that, had he written it later in life, the plot would have been more complete, and there would have been "a greater variety in the characters, to relieve the mind from the pressure of incidents so mournful." But in issuing it to the public—after keeping it for forty-six years unprinted—while he revised it carefully, Wordsworth made no alteration on the story, or on the characters, simply because he did not wish it to be thought that he was adapting it for dramatic performance. He had the sense to see that what failed in 1797 would fail in 1843, and therefore wished it simply to be read as an exhibition of the underlying tendencies of human nature; and, (Oswald's character in particular), as casting some light on "the apparently *motiveless* actions of bad men."

On his return to Alfoxden, Wordsworth continued to write fresh lyrical ballads. Coleridge had left Nether Stowey, having undertaken the work of preaching in a Unitarian chapel at Shrewsbury. The brothers, Josiah and Thomas Wedgwood, however,—whose large philanthropy was as memorable as their artistic work in pottery,—recognising his rare genius, and seeing it dissipated by miscellaneous work, offered him an annuity of £150, to free him from present embarrassment; and in January 1798, Coleridge wrote as follows to Wordsworth from Shrewsbury: "You know that I have accepted the magnificent liberality of Josiah and Thomas Wedgwood. I accepted it on the presumption that I had talents, honesty, and propensities to persevering effort. . . . Of the pleasant ideas which accompanied this unexpected event, it was not the least pleasant, that I should be

able to trace the spring and early summer of Alfoxden with *you*, and that wherever *your* after residence may be, it is probable that you will be within the reach of my tether, lengthened as it now is." *

By going back to Stowey, Coleridge could renew his intimacy with Wordsworth, and how often they met, how the lives and interests of the Wordsworth household were identified with his, during the next four months, Dorothy's *Journal* is the best evidence. Coleridge said of them, "We are three people, but only one soul." This *Journal*—which, from the end of January to the beginning of May will be printed almost in its entirety—requires little comment; and it renders any description of the district by another pen worse than useless. Some persons will doubtless wish that Dorothy had written fewer trivial details, and given us instead an ampler record of the talk of the most brilliant conversationalist of the century, especially during that *annus mirabilis*, in which he and her brother walked so much together, and planned and wrote the *Lyrical Ballads* in concert. But it must be remembered, first, that she jotted down these humble memoranda merely as aids to her memory, and without the faintest idea that they would ever see the light; and secondly, that it was almost impossible to record Coleridge's talk. Wordsworth himself described it as "like a majestic river, the sound or sight of whose course you caught at intervals; which was sometimes concealed by forests, sometimes lost in sand; then came flashing out broad and distinct; and even when it took a turn which your eye could not follow, yet you always felt and knew that there was a connection in its parts, and that it was the same river." It is not at all likely that the discussions of these two friends turned to the politics of the day,

* See *Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 116.

nearly ^{so} much as to Nature, and to the very things that Dorothy, in her own characteristic way, so directly, naïvely, and laconically sets down. Coleridge, in the *Biographia Literaria*,—speaking of his residence at Stowey, of what he gained from Wordsworth, and of his reverence for him as a poet, a philosopher, and a man, adds,—“his conversation extended to almost all subjects, except physics and politics; with the latter he never troubled himself.” Besides, on politics the two men were slowly drifting asunder, while their poetic work still ran in parallel lines. Mr Nichol’s remark on the difference between them is excellent—“No two men could be more unlike than the poets who now met beside the Quantocks. Coleridge, a student and recluse from his boyhood, of immense erudition, a *heluo librorum*; all his life a valetudinarian, who scarcely knew what health was—ever planning mighty works—*multa et pulcra minans*—yet so irresolute and infirm of purpose, as never to realise his aspirations—the very *Hamlet* of literature; Wordsworth, on the other hand,—as robust in body as one of the peasants of his native Cumberland, of indomitable purpose, keeping his way right onward when made the scorn of fools, till he became the glory of his age—was no reader of books, except of the great book of Nature, and his study was on the Quantock downs. . . . ” *

In addition to its allusions to Coleridge, Dorothy Wordsworth’s Journal will be appreciated by many, from the very minuteness of its record, its notes on the gradual changes of the seasons as the months advanced, and even its homely domestic and economic jottings.

* *The Quantocks, and their Associations.*

CHAPTER IX.

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH'S JOURNAL, WRITTEN AT ALFOXDEN IN 1798.

THE following chapter contains the larger part of the Journal which Dorothy Wordsworth kept, of her own and her brother's daily life at Alfoxden, during the first four months of 1798. Many trivial details are omitted, and if any that are recorded are thought too trivial for preservation, it will be seen that this Journal brings out, in a way that nothing else could do, the closeness of the tie between Coleridge and the Wordsworth household. It is probable that during these Alfoxden days Dorothy Wordsworth "maintained,"—for Coleridge as well as for her brother,— "a saving intercourse with his true self." If she did not "give him eyes," and "give him ears," she kept him,—during their conversations in the woods and coombes of the Quantocks, and on the road to Stowey,—true to his vocation as a poet. Had it not been for Alfoxden, and the magnet that drew him thither in all weathers in 1798, Samuel Taylor Coleridge might have drifted away from "Lyrical Ballads," into popular preaching, and miscellaneous newspaper writing, for many a year to come.

"*Alfoxden, 20th January 1798.*—The green paths down the hill-sides are channels for streams. The young wheat is streaked by silver lines of water running between the ridges, the sheep are gathered together on the slopes. After the wet dark days, the country seems more populous. It peoples itself in the sunbeams. The garden, mimic of spring, is gay with flowers. The purple-starred hepatica spreads

and in the sun and the clustering snow-drops put forth
 their white heads a first morning filled with green, and
 the leaves were suddenly seemed hanging their heads
 downwards and slowly lengthening their slender stems.
 The falling leaves of an intervening brown showing the
 light beneath the thin net-work of their upper boughs.
 The highest ridge of that round hill covered with
 masses and the shade of the trees show in the light like
 the shadows of a pool.

1812.—Walked in the hill-side—a warm day. Sate
 under the trees in the park. The tops of the beeches of a
 new-wood in autumn. These trees felled by the sea breeze
 and with many sea-grown moss as a grove not stripped
 of its leaves. Mossy tops more proper than acorns for fairy
 gardens.

1812.—Walked through the wood to Halford. The ivy
 reaching round the trees like fringed serpents. The day
 warm and shelter in the bushes. Exquisitely bearing
 berries. Young and the male and female flowers on
 separate trees.

1812.—Bright sunshine. I went out at three o'clock.
 The air perfectly calm. The streaked with deeper colour by
 the clouds and tongues of points of sand: on our return of
 a light wind. The sun gone down. The crescent moon,
 Jupiter and Venus. The sound of the sea distinctly heard
 on the tops of the hills which we could never hear in
 summer. We attribute this partly to the bareness of the
 trees, but chiefly to the absence of the singing of birds, the
 hum of insects that noiseless noise which lives in the summer
 air*. The villages marked out by beautiful beds of smoke.

* Compare Keats—

There crept
 A little noiseless noise amongst the leaves
 Born of the very sigh that silence heaves.

—(Miscellaneous Poems.)

The turf fading into the mountain road. The scarlet flowers of the moss.

"24th.—Walked between half-past three and half-past five. The evening cold and clear. The sea of a sober grey, streaked by the deeper grey clouds. The half dead sound of the near sheep-bell, in the hollow of the sloping coombe, exquisitely soothing.

"25th.—Went to Poole's after tea. The sky spread over with one continuous cloud, whitened by the light of the moon, which, though her dim shape was seen, did not throw forth so strong a light as to chequer the earth with shadows. At once the clouds seemed to cleave asunder, and left her in the centre of a black-blue vault. She sailed along, followed by multitudes of stars, small, and bright, and sharp. Their brightness seemed concentrated.

"26th.—Walked upon the hill-tops; followed the sheep tracks till we overlooked the larger coombe. Sat in the sunshine. The distant sheep-bells, the sound of the stream; the woodman winding along the half-marked road with his laden pony; locks of wool still spangled with the dew-drops; the blue-grey sea shaded with immense masses of cloud, not streaked; the sheep glittering in the sunshine. Returned through the wood. The trees skirting the wood, being exposed more directly to the action of the sea breeze, stripped of the net-work of their upper boughs, which are stiff and erect and like black skeletons; the ground strewn with the red berries of the holly. Set forward before two o'clock. Returned a little after four.

"27th.—Walked from seven o'clock till half-past eight. Upon the whole an uninteresting evening. Only once while we were in the wood the moon burst through the

And Coleridge—

The stilly murmur of the distant sea
Tells us of silence.—(*The Æolian Harp.*)

invisible veil which enveloped her, the shadows of the oaks blackened, and their lines became more strongly marked. The withered leaves were coloured with a deeper yellow, a brighter gloss spotted the hollies; again her form became dimmer; the sky flat, unmarked by distances. The manufacturer's dog makes a strange, uncouth howl, which it continues many minutes after there is no noise near it but that of the brook. It howls at the murmur of the village stream.

"29th.—A very stormy day. William walked to the top of the hill to see the sea. Nothing distinguishable but a heavy blackness. An immense bough riven from one of the fir trees.

"30th.—William called me into the garden to observe a singular appearance about the moon. A perfect rainbow, within the bow one star, only of colours more vivid. The semi-circle soon became a complete circle, and in the course of three or four minutes the whole faded away. Walked to the blacksmith's and the baker's. An uninteresting evening.

"31st.—Set forward to Stowey at half-past five. A violent storm in the wood. Sheltered under the hollies. When we left home the moon immensely large, the sky scattered over with clouds. These soon closed in, contracting the dimensions of the moon without concealing her. The sound of the pattering shower, and the gusts of wind, very grand. Left the wood when nothing remained of the storm but the driving wind, and a few scattering drops of rain. Presently all clear, Venus first showing herself between the struggling clouds; afterwards Jupiter appeared. The hawthorn hedges black and pointed, glittering with millions of diamond drops. The hollies shining with broader patches of light. The road to the village of Holford glittered like another stream. On our return, the

wind high—a violent storm of hail and rain at the Castle of Comfort. All the heavens seemed in one perpetual motion when the rain ceased; the moon appearing, now half veiled, and now retired behind heavy clouds, the stars still moving, the roads very dirty.

"*February 1st.*—About two hours before dinner, set forward towards Mr Bartelmy's. The wind blew so keen in our faces that we felt ourselves inclined to seek the covert of the wood. There we had a warm shelter, gathered a burthen of large rotten boughs blown down by the wind of the preceding night. The sun shone clear, but all at once a heavy blackness hung over the sea. The trees almost *roared*, and the ground seemed in motion with the multitudes of dancing leaves, which made a rustling sound distinct from that of the trees. Still the asses pastured in quietness under the hollies, undisturbed by these forerunners of the storm. The wind beat furiously against us as we returned. Full moon. She rose in uncommon majesty over the sea, slowly ascending through the clouds. Sat with the window open an hour in the moonlight.

"*2nd.*—Walked through the wood, and on to the Downs before dinner. A warm pleasant air. The sun shone, but was often obscured by straggling clouds. The redbreasts made a ceaseless song in the woods. The wind rose very high in the evening. The room smoked so that we were obliged to quit it. Young lambs in a green pasture in the Coombe. Thick legs, large heads, black staring eyes, gaunt as a new-dropped lamb.

"*3rd.*—A mild morning, the windows open at breakfast, the redbreasts singing in the garden. Walked with Cole-ridge over the hills. The sea at first obscured by vapour; that vapour afterwards slid in one mighty mass along the sea-shore; the islands and one point of land clear beyond it. The distant country (which was purple in the clear dull

air), overhung by straggling clouds that sailed over it, appeared like the darker clouds, which are often seen at a great distance apparently motionless, while the nearer ones pass quickly over them, driven by the lower winds. I never saw such a union of earth, sky, and sea. The clouds beneath our feet spread themselves to the water, and the clouds of the sky almost joined them. Gathered sticks in the wood; a perfect stillness. The redbreasts sang upon the leafless boughs. Of a great number of sheep in the field, only one standing. Returned to dinner at five o'clock. The moonlight still and warm as a summer's night at nine o'clock.

"4th.—Walked a great part of the way to Stowey with Coleridge. The morning warm and sunny. The young lasses seen on the hill-tops, in the villages and roads, in their summer holiday clothes—pink petticoats and blue. Mothers with their children in arms, and the little ones that could just walk, tottering by their sides. Midges or small flies spinning in the sunshine; the songs of the lark and redbreast, daisies upon the turf, the hazels in blossom, honeysuckles budding. I saw one solitary strawberry flower under a hedge. The furze gay with blossom. The moss rubbed from the pailings by the sheep, that leave locks of wool, and the red marks with which they are spotted, upon the wood.

"5th.—Walked to Stowey with Coleridge, returned by Woodlands; a very warm day. In the continued singing of birds distinguished the notes of a blackbird or thrush. The sea overshadowed by a thick dark mist, the land in sunshine. The sheltered oaks and beeches still retaining their brown leaves. Observed some trees putting out red shoots. Query: What trees they are?

"8th.—Went up the park, and over the tops of the hills, till we came to a new and very delicious pathway, which

ducted us to the Coombe. Sat a considerable time upon the heath. Its surface restless and glittering with the motion of the piles of withered grass, and the waving of the spiders' threads. On our return the mist still hanging over the sea, but the opposite coast clear, and the rocky cliffs distinguishable. In the deep Coombe, as we stood upon the sunless hill, we saw the hills of grass, light and glittering, and the insects passing.

"10th.—Walked to Woodlands, and to the waterfall. The adders-tongue and the ferns green in the low damp dell. These plants now in perpetual motion from the current of the air. In summer only moved by the drippings of the rocks. A cloudy day.

"11th.—Walked with Coleridge near to Stowey. The day pleasant, but cloudy.

"12th.—Walked alone to Stowey. Returned in the evening with Coleridge. A mild, pleasant, cloudy day.

"13th.—Walked with Coleridge through the wood. A mild and pleasant morning, the near prospect clear. The ridges of the hills fringed with wood, showing the sea through them like the white sky, and still beyond the dim horizon of the distant hills, hanging as it were in one undetermined line between sea and sky.

"14th.—Gathered sticks with William in the wood, he being unwell and not able to go further. The young birch trees of a bright red, through which gleams a shade of purple. Sat down in a thick part of the wood. The near trees still, even to their topmost boughs, but a perpetual motion in those that skirt the wood. The breeze rose gently; its path distinctly marked till it came to the very spot where we were.

"15th.—Gathered sticks in the further wood. The dell green with moss and brambles, and the tall and slender pillars of the unbranching oaks. I crossed the water with

letters ; returned to William and Basil. A shower met us in the wood, and a ruffling breeze.

" 17th.—A deep snow upon the ground. William and Coleridge walked to Mr Bartelmy's, and to Stowey. William returned, and we walked through the wood into the Coombe to fetch some eggs. The sun shone bright and clear. A deep stillness in the thickest part of the wood, undisturbed except by the occasional dropping of the snow from the holly boughs ; no other sound but that of the water, and the slender notes of a redbreast, which sang at intervals on the outskirts of the southern side of the wood. There the bright green moss was bare at the roots of the trees, and the little birds were upon it. The whole appearance of the wood was enchanting ; and each tree, taken singly, was beautiful. The branches of the hollies pendent with their white burden, but still showing their bright red berries, and their glossy green leaves. The bare branches of the oaks thickened by the snow.

" 18th.—Walked after dinner beyond Woodlands. A sharp and very cold evening ; first observed the crescent moon, a silvery line and thready bow, attended by Jupiter and Venus in their palest hues.

" 19th.—I walked to Stowey before dinner ; William unable to go all the way. Returned alone ; a fine sunny, clear, frosty day. The sea still, and blue, and broad, and smooth.

" 21st.—Coleridge came in the morning, which prevented our walking. William went through the wood with him towards Stowey ; a very stormy night.

" 22nd.—Coleridge came in the morning to dinner. William and I walked after dinner to Woodlands ; the moon and two planets ; sharp and frosty. Met a razor-grinder with a soldier's jacket on, a knapsack upon his back, and a boy to drag his wheel. The sea very black, and making a loud

noise as we came through the wood, loud as if disturbed, and the wind was silent.

"23rd.—William walked with Coleridge in the morning. I did not go out.

"24th.—Went to the hill-top. Sat a considerable time overlooking the country towards the sea. The air blew pleasantly round us. The landscape mildly interesting. The Welsh hills capped by a huge range of tumultuous white clouds. The sea, spotted with white, of a bluish grey in general, and streaked with darker lines. The near shores clear; scattered farm houses, half-concealed by green mossy orchards, fresh straw lying at the doors; hay-stacks in the fields. Brown fallows, the springing wheat, like a shade of green over the brown earth, and the choice meadow plots, full of sheep and lambs, of a soft and vivid green; a few wreaths of blue smoke, spreading along the ground; the oaks and beeches in the hedges retaining their yellow leaves; the distant prospect on the land side, islanded with sunshine; the sea, like a basin full to the margin; the fresh-ploughed fields dark; the turnips of a lively rough green. Returned through the wood.

"26th.—Coleridge came in the morning, and Mr and Mrs Cruikshank; walked with Coleridge nearly to Stowey after dinner. A very clear afternoon. We lay sidelong upon the turf, and gazed on the landscape till it melted into more than natural loveliness. The sea very uniform, of a pale greyish blue, only one distant bay, bright and blue as a sky; had there been a vessel sailing up it, a perfect image of delight. Walked to the top of a high hill to see a fortification. Again sat down to feed upon the prospect; a magnificent scene, *curiously* spread out for even minute inspection, though so extensive that the mind is afraid to calculate its bounds. A winter prospect shows every cottage, every farm, and the forms of distant trees such as in summer have no

distinguishing mark. On our return, Jupiter and Venus before us. While the twilight still overpowered the light of the moon, we were reminded that she was shining bright above our heads, by our faint shadows going before us. We had seen her on the tops of the hills, melting into the blue sky. Poole called while we were absent.

"27th.—I walked to Stowey in the evening. William and Basil went with me through the wood. The prospect bright, yet *mildly* beautiful. The sea big and white, swelled to the very shores, but round and high in the middle. Coleridge returned with me, as far as the wood. A very bright moonlight night. Venus almost like another moon. Lost to us at Alfoxden long before she goes down the large white sea.

"*March 1st.*—We rose early. A thick fog obscured the distant prospect entirely, but the shapes of the near trees and the dome of the wood dimly seen and dilated. It cleared away between ten and eleven. The shapes of the mist, slowly moving along, exquisitely beautiful; passing over the sheep they almost seemed to have more of life than those quiet creatures. The unseen birds singing in the mist.

"2nd.—Went a part of the way home with Coleridge in the morning. Gathered fir apples afterwards under the trees.

"3rd.—I went to the shoemaker's. William lay under the trees till my return. Afterwards went to the secluded farm house in search of eggs, and returned over the hill. A very mild, cloudy evening. The rose trees in the hedges and the elders budding.

"5th.—Gathered fir apples. A thick fog came on. Walked to the baker's and the shoemaker's, and through the fields towards Woodlands. On our return, found Tom Poole in the parlour. He drank tea with us.

"6th.—A pleasant morning, the sea white and bright, and full to the brim. I walked to see Coleridge in the

evening. William went with me to the wood. Coleridge very ill. It was a mild, pleasant afternoon, but the evening became very foggy; when I was near Woodlands, the fog overhead became thin, and I saw the shapes of the Central Stars. Again it closed, and the whole sky was the same.

"7th.—William and I drank tea at Coleridge's. A cloudy sky. Observed nothing particularly interesting—the distant prospect obscured. One only leaf upon the top of a tree—the sole remaining leaf—danced round and round like a rag blown by the wind.

"10th.—Coleridge, William, and I walked in the evening to the top of the hill. We all passed the morning in sauntering about the park and gardens, the children playing about, the old man at the top of the hill gathering furze; interesting groups of human creatures, the young frisking and dancing in the sun, the elder quietly drinking in the life and soul of the sun and air.

"11th.—A cold day. The children went down towards the sea. William and I walked to the top of the hills above Holford. Met the blacksmith. Pleasant to see the labourer on Sunday jump with the friskiness of a cow upon a sunny day.

"18th.—The Coleridges left us. A cold, windy morning. Walked with them half way. On our return, sheltered under the hollies during a hail-shower. The withered leaves danced with the hailstones. William wrote a description of the storm.

"19th.—William and Basil and I walked to the hill-tops, a very cold, bleak day. We were met on our return by a severe hailstorm. William wrote some lines describing a stunted thorn.

"21st.—We drank tea at Coleridge's. A quiet shower of snow was in the air during more than half our walk. At our return the sky partially shaded with clouds. The

horned moon was set. Startled two night birds from the great elm tree.

" 23rd.—Coleridge dined with us. He brought his ballad finished. We walked with him to the miner's house. A beautiful evening, very starry, the horned moon.

" 24th.—Coleridge, the Chesters, and Ellen Crewkshank called. We walked with them through the wood. Went in the evening into the Coombe to get eggs; returned through the wood, and walked in the park. A sort of white shade over the blue sky. The stars dim. The spring continues to advance very slowly, no green trees, the hedges leafless; nothing green but the brambles that still retain their old leaves, the evergreens and the palms, which indeed are not absolutely green. Some brambles I observed to-day budding afresh, and those have shed their old leaves. The crooked arm of the old oak tree points upwards to the moon.

" 25th.—Walked to Coleridge's after tea. Arrived at home at one o'clock. The night cloudy but not dark.

" 26th.—Went to meet Wedgwood at Coleridge's after dinner. Reached home at half-past twelve, a fine moonlight night; half moon.

" 27th.—Dined at Poole's. Arrived at home a little after twelve.

" 29th.—Coleridge dined with us.

" *April 2nd.*—A very high wind. Coleridge came to avoid the smoke; stayed all night. We walked in the wood, and sat under the trees. The half of the wood perfectly still, while the wind was making a loud noise behind us. The still trees only bowed their heads, as if listening to the wind. The hollies in the thick wood unshaken by the blast; only, when it came with a greater force, shaken by the rain drops falling from the bare oaks above.

" 3rd.—Walked to Crookham, with Coleridge and William,

to make the appeal. Left William there, and parted with Coleridge at the top of the hill. A very stormy afternoon.

"4th.—Walked to the sea-side in the afternoon. A great commotion in the air, but the sea neither grand nor beautiful. A violent shower in returning. Sheltered under some fir trees at Potsdam.

"15th.—Set forward after breakfast to Crookham, and returned to dinner at three o'clock. A fine cloudy morning. Walked about the squire's grounds. Quaint waterfalls about, where Nature was very successfully striving to make beautiful what art had deformed—ruins, hermitages, &c., &c. In spite of all these things, the dell romantic and beautiful, though everywhere planted with unnaturalised trees. Happily we cannot shape the huge hills, or carve out the valleys according to our fancy.

"20th.—Walked in the evening up the hill dividing the Coombes. Came home the Crookham way, by the thorn, and the little muddy pond. Nine o'clock at our return. William all the morning engaged in wearisome composition. The moon crescent; "Peter Bell" begun.

"26th.—William went to have his picture taken. I walked with him. Dined at home. Coleridge and he drank tea.

"May 6th, Sunday.—Expected the painter, and Coleridge. A rainy morning—very pleasant in the evening. Met Coleridge as we were walking out. Went with him to Stowey; heard the nightingale; saw a glow-worm.

"Wednesday, 16th.—Coleridge, William, and myself set forward to the Chedder rocks; slept at Bridgewater."

CHAPTER X.

LAST DAYS AT ALFOXDEN; VISIT TO THE WYE, ETC.

DURING the early spring of 1798, Wordsworth saw that he must quit Alfoxden at no distant date. The original agreement or lease of the house, by Mrs St Albyn—now in possession of Mrs Sandford at Chester*—is signed by Thomas Poole of Nether Stowey, as witness; and it was largely owing to Poole's kindness and tact that the Wordsworths were able to obtain entry into Alfoxden at all. The owner of the property was a minor, and the trustees—by whom it had been leased to Wordsworth—became alarmed about their tenant, and his many radical friends. In one of the notes which Wordsworth added to the Memoir of himself, compiled by the late Baron Field,† he wrote the following, opposite a statement of Hazlitt's to the effect that Alfoxden "was in the possession of a friend, who gave him the free use of it": "A mistake. I rented the house, and had no personal knowledge of the trustees of its owner, then a minor." The local Conservatives imagined that there was a party danger—if there was no national risk—in the gatherings and conferences of men so little understood as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It was very possibly the long and late wanderings of the poets, and their habit of muttering their half-formed verses aloud—singing them into rhythmic shape—that awakened suspicion. But what-

* Mrs Sandford has also a letter of Poole's to Mrs St Albyn, assuring her of Wordsworth's "respectability," in view of a further lease.

† It is still in MS.

ver the reason, the Wordsworths were not only unpopular in the neighbourhood, they were suspected; and a Sir Philip Hale of Cannington gave information to the Government that very suspicious persons were now in this Quantock country. Accordingly, a Spy was sent down to watch them all—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Poole, &c.* The story of this Spy has been deemed apocryphal by many persons; but the following letter from Southey to his brother gives General Peachey's account of the affair:—

“ KESWICK, August 22, 1805.

“ My Dear Tom,—. . . General Peachy . . . spoke of the relationship with us; he said of me and Wordsworth that, however we might have got into good company, he might depend upon it we were still Jacobins at heart, and that he believed he had been instrumental in having us looked after in Somersetshire. This refers to a spy who was sent down to Stowey to look after Coleridge and Wordsworth. The fellow, after trying to tempt the country people to tell lies, could collect nothing more than that the gentlemen used to walk a good deal upon the coast, and that they were what they call ‘poets.’ He got drunk at the inn, and told his whole errand and history, but we did not till now know who was the main mover.” . . . †

In writing to Thelwall from Stowey, Coleridge did his best to dissuade him from carrying out a wish he entertained to come to settle there. He did this on the ground that Thelwall's coming would add a new burden to Poole. As Poole had brought much odium on himself amongst “the aristocrats,” by first bringing Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and then William Wordsworth, the advent of so pronounced a radical as Thelwall would make the cup run over! I

* Compare, *A Group of Englishmen*, by Eliza Meteyard, p. 78.

† See *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, vol. ii., p. 343.

think it was Thelwall's visit to Stowey on the 18th July 1797 (referred to at p. 117) that first awakened suspicion on the part of Mrs St Albyn; but Coleridge's expression that Wordsworth was "caballed against" is far too strong. He was merely suspected.

In a poem of Thelwall's, called *Lines written at Bridgewater in Somersetshire, on the 29th of July 1797, during a long Excursion, in quest of a peaceful Retreat*, he expresses a wish to settle near "My Samuel," and

"Alfoxden's musing tenant, and the maid
Of ardent eye, who with fraternal love
Sweetens his solitude. With those should join
Arcadian Poole, swain of a happier age."*

Neither "Samuel," however, nor the "musing tenant," nor "the maid," nor the "Arcadian" would hear of it. It is curious to think of the local excitement to which, in days of disturbance, a very mild conspirator may give rise!

The following letter from Wordsworth to James Losh, a friend at Carlisle, explains his relation to Alfoxden, and his project of spending the next winter in Germany. It will be seen that while Wordsworth remarks to Losh, "we are obliged to quit this place at midsummer," he says nothing about being refused a renewal of the lease. Any request for it—and it probably *was* made by Poole—would certainly come from others; and Wordsworth writes the following, on the margin of Baron Field's MS., about the 'caballing long and loud' against himself as 'occasioning his removal.' "A mistake. *Not the occasion* of my removal. Annoyances I had none. The facts mentioned by Coleridge of a spy, &c., came not to my knowledge till I had left the neighbourhood. I was not refused a continuance. I never applied for one."

* See *The Fairy of the Lake, etc.*, by J. Thelwall (1802), p. 130.

"MY DEAR LOSH,*—I have wished much to hear from you. I suppose that your marriage has not yet taken place, or I should certainly have been apprised of it. I have had some fears about your health, but I have constantly banished them as soon as they came into my mind. Perhaps you have heard of the unexampled liberality of the Wedgewoods towards Coleridge; they have settled an annuity of £150 upon him, for life. We are obliged to quit this place at midsummer. I have already spoken to you of its enchanting beauty. Do contrive to come and see us before we go away. Coleridge is now writing by me at the same table. I need not say how ardently he joins with me in this wish, and how deeply interested he is in anything relating to you.

We have a delightful scheme in agitation, which is rendered still more delightful by a probability which I cannot exclude from my mind that you may be induced to join in the party. We have come to a resolution—Coleridge, Mrs Coleridge, my sister, and myself—of going into Germany, where we purpose to pass the two ensuing years in order to acquire the German language, and to furnish ourselves with a tolerable stock of information in natural science. Our plan is to settle if possible in a village near a University, in a pleasant, and, if we can, a mountainous country. It will be desirable that the place should be as near as may be to Ham-
burgh, on account of the expense of travelling. What do you say to this? I know that Cecilia Baldwin has great activity and spirit; may I venture to whisper a wish to her that she would consent to join this little colony? I have not forgotten your apprehensions from sea-sickness; there may be many other obstacles which I cannot divine. I cannot, however, suppress wishes which I have so ardently felt. Where is

*From the Add. MSS. Brit. Museum, No. 18204, f. 193 :—"William Wordsworth, Alfoxden, March 11, 1798, to James Losh, Esq., Woodside, near Carlisle, Cumberland."

Tweddel? Will you have the goodness to write to him, and to request that he would inform you what places he has seen in Germany, which he thinks eligible residences for persons with such views, either for accidental or permanent advantages; also, if he could give any information respecting the prices of board, lodging, house rents, provisions, &c., upon which we should be justified in proceeding, it would be highly useful.

"I have not yet seen any numbers of the *Economist*, though I requested Cottle to transmit them to me. I have been tolerably industrious within the last few weeks. I have written 706 lines of a poem which I hope to make of considerable utility. Its title will be, *The Recluse, or Views of Nature, Man, and Society*. Let me hear from you immediately. My sister begs her kind remembrances.—I am, dear Losh, your affectionate friend,

"W. WORDSWORTH."

"ALFOXDEN, NEAR STOWEY-BRIDGEWATER,
SOMERSETSHIRE, *March 11.*" *

A visit which William Hazlitt paid to Alfoxden in the spring of 1798 was recorded by him subsequently in *The Liberal*.†

It is difficult to know when Hazlitt is to be regarded as a literal reporter, and when he is introducing something of De Quincey's style of narrative. There may be some subjective colour in this, as in others of his picturesque delineations: but it is very vivid, and at times felicitous; and, although it did not altogether please the subject delineated! I only wish that Wordsworth had more frequently been photographed in the same way.

* It will be seen from this letter that, during these Alfoxden days, Wordsworth had begun the composition of what he expected would be his *magnum opus*, viz., "*The Recluse*."

† See Vol. ii., p. 371.

"In [the afternoon," says Hazlitt, "Coleridge took me to Alfoxden. . . . Wordsworth himself was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast, and we had free access to her brother's poems, the Lyrical Ballads, which were still in manuscript. I dipt into a few of them, with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family portraits of the age of Georges I. and II.; and from the wooded declivity of the adjoining Park, that overlooked my window, at the dawn of day, could 'hear the loud stag speak.'*" That morning as soon as breakfast was over, we strolled into the Park, and seating ourselves on the branch of an old oak tree, Coleridge read aloud, with a sonorous and musical voice, the ballad of 'Betty Foy.' I was not critically or sceptically inclined. I saw touches of truth, and nature, and took the rest for granted. But in *The Thorn*, *The Mad Mother*, and *The Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman*, I felt that deeper passion and pathos, which have since been acknowledged as the characteristics of the author; and, the sense of a new style, and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or the first welcome breath of spring. . . .

"Coleridge and I walked back to Stowey that evening; and . . . as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or waterfall in the summer moonlight, he lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was a something corporeal, a *matter-of-factness*, a clinging to the palpable, and often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him

* Ben Jonson.

through the air; it sprung out of the ground, like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray on which the goldfinch sang. He said, however, if I remember right, that this objection must be confined to his descriptive pieces—that his philosophical poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the Universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition rather than by deduction.

"The next day, Wordsworth arrived from Bristol, at Coleridge's cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some degree to his friend's description of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote like. He was quaintly dressed in a brown fustian jacket, and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait, not unlike his own Peter Bell. There was a severe, worn presence of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance), an intense high narrow forehead,* a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantry's bust wants the marking traits, but he was teased into making it regular and heavy.† Haydon's head of him,

* Wordsworth writes a note on the MS. here: "Narrow forehead! I went through three large magazines of hats in Paris, before I could find one large enough, and yet my skull is almost cut away behind!"

† Baron Field's footnote here is: "Coleridge said of it that it was more like Wordsworth than Wordsworth himself was. He meant it was too much idealized, that it expresses the soul of the poetry, and not the countenance of the man. If so, Wordsworth agrees with him, and both he and Miss Wordsworth are satisfied that it is the best likeness extant—the happiest attitude of the face, just as Sir Thomas Lawrence used to achieve on the canvas. Wordsworth informed me that he prepared Sir Francis Sandford's mind for it, by repeating to him three stanzas of *The Poet's Epitaph*, beginning 'But who is he with modest looks?' &c. Wordsworth heard Mr Pickersgill's portraits of him earthy and lumpish compared

† sculptor's 'animated bust.'" See a paper on "The portraits," in the *Wordsworth Society Transactions*, No. iii., p. 20.

introduced in the 'Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem,' is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression.* He sat down, and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern burr, like the crust in wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire cheese on the table, and said triumphantly that 'his marriage with experience had not been so unproductive as Mr Southey's, in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life!'+ He had been to see the Castle Spectre by Monk Lewis, while at Bristol, and described it very well. He said, 'It fitted the taste of the audience like a glove.' This *ad captandum* merit was, however, by no means a recommendation of it, according to the severe principles of the new school, which reject rather than court popular effect. Wordsworth, looking out of the low-latticed window said, 'How beautifully the sun *sits on that yellow bank*.' I thought, with what eyes these poets see Nature; and, ever after, when I have seen the sunset streaming on the objects facing it, conceived I had made a discovery, and thanked Mr Wordsworth for having made one for me.

"We went over to Alfoxden again the following day, and Wordsworth read us the story of 'Peter Bell' in the open air, and the comment made upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the poem, 'his face was as a book, where men might read strange matters;'+ and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. There is a chant in the recitation, both of Coleridge and Wordsworth,

* Painted in 1817. See Haydon's *Autobiography*, vol. i., p. 358. Also *Transactions of the Wordsworth Society*, No. iii., p. 59.

+ Here, I think, we have the hand of Hazlitt rather than that of Wordsworth.

‡ Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, act i., scene 5.

which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making use of this ambiguous accompaniment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animated, and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained, and internal. The one might be termed dramatic, the other more lyrical. Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling copses of a pine wood; whereas Wordsworth always wrote (if he could) walking up and down on a straight gravel walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruptions."

For this, and for some other reminiscences, posterity is grateful to Mr Hazlitt.

Cottle's account of the earliest transactions with Wordsworth, in reference to the two tragedies, has been already given. While the offer for the tragedies was declined, Wordsworth says that "the volume of poems was left for future arrangement." This refers to the *Lyrical Ballads* and Cottle's account of the negotiations which led to his publishing this volume is too interesting to omit.

"A visit to Mr Coleridge at Stowey had been the means of my introduction to Mr Wordsworth, who read me many of his Lyrical Pieces, when I perceived in them a peculiar but decided merit. I advised him to publish them, expressing a belief that they would be well received. He further said that he should be at no risk; that I would give him the same sum which I had given Mr Coleridge and Mr Southey, and that it would be a gratifying circumstance to me to usher into the world, by becoming the publisher of, the first volumes of three such poets as Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth—a distinction that might never again occur to a provincial publisher.

"To the idea of publishing he expressed a strong objec-

tion, and after several interviews I left him, with an earnest wish that he would reconsider his determination.

"Soon after Mr Wordsworth sent me the following letter :—

"ALFOXDEN, 12th April 1798.

"MY DEAR COTTLE,—. . . You will be pleased to hear that I have gone on very rapidly adding to my stock of poetry. Do come and let me read it to you, under the old trees in the Park. We have a little more than two months to stay in this place. Within these few days the season has advanced with greater rapidity than I ever remember, and the country becomes almost every hour more lovely. God bless you.—Your affectionate friend,

"W. WORDSWORTH.'

"A little after, I received an invitation from Mr Coleridge, to pay himself and Mr Wordsworth another visit. At about the same time I received the following corroborative invitation from Mr Wordsworth :—

"DEAR COTTLE,—We look for you with great impatience. We will never forgive you if you do not come. I say nothing of the "Salisbury Plain," till I see you. I am determined to finish 'it, and equally so that you shall publish.

"I have lately been busy about another plan, which I do not wish to mention till I see you. Let this be very, very soon, and stay a week if possible; as much longer as you can. God bless you, dear Cottle.—Yours sincerely,

"W. WORDSWORTH.

"ALFOXDEN, 9th May 1798.'

"The following letter, on the same subject, was received from Mr Coleridge :—

"MY DEAR COTTLE,—Neither Wordsworth nor myself could have been otherwise than uncomfortable if any but

yourself had received from us the first offer of our tragedies and of the volume of Wordsworth's poems. At the same time we did not expect that you could, with prudence and propriety advance such a sum as we should wish at the time we specified. In short, we both regard the publication of our tragedies as an evil. It is not impossible but that on happier times they may be brought on the stage; and to throw away this chance for a mere trifle would be to make the present moment act fraudulently and injuriously towards the future time.

"My tragedy employed and strained all my thoughts and fancies for six or seven months; Wordsworth consumed far more time, and far more thought, and far more genius. We consider the publication of them an evil on any terms; but our thoughts were bent on a plan, for the accomplishment of which a certain sum of money was necessary (the whole at that particular time), and in order to that we resolved, although reluctantly, to part with our tragedies; that is, if we could obtain thirty guineas for each, and at less than thirty guineas Wordsworth will not part with the copyright of his volume of poems. We shall offer the Tragedies to no one, for we have determined to procure the money some other way. If you chose the volume of Poems at the price mentioned, to be paid at the time specified, *i.e.*, thirty guineas, to be paid sometime in the last fortnight of July, you may have them; but remember, my dear fellow, I write to you now merely as a bookseller, and entreat you, in your answer, to consider yourself only. As to us, although money is necessary to our plan [that of visiting Germany], yet the plan is not necessary to our happiness; and if it was, W. would sell his Poems to someone else, or we could procure the money without selling the Poems; so I entreat you, again and again, in your answer, which must be immediate, consider yourself only.

"Wordsworth has been caballed against *so long and so loudly*, that he has found it impossible to prevail on the tenant of the Alfoxden estate to let him the house after the first agreement is expired, so we must quit it at Midsummer; whether we shall be able to procure him a house and furniture near Stowey we know not, and yet we must; for the hills, and the woods, and the streams, and the sea, and the shores would break forth into reproaches against us if we did not strain every nerve to keep their Poet among them, Without joking, and in serious sadness, Poole and I cannot endure to think of losing him.

"At all events, come down, Cottle, as soon as you can, but before Midsummer, and we will procure a horse easy as *thy* own soul, and we will go on to a roam to Linton and Linmouth, which, if thou comest in May, will be in all their pride of woods and waterfalls, not to speak of its august cliff, and the green ocean, and the vast Valley of Stones, all which live disdainful of the seasons, or accept new honours only from the winter's snow. At all events, come down soon, and cease not to believe me much and affectionately your friend,

S. T. COLERIDGE."

"In consequence of their conjoint invitation, I spent a week with Mr C. and Mr W. at Alfoxden House, and during this time (besides the reading of MS. poems) they took me to Linmouth, and Linton, and the Valley of Stones. . . .

"At this interview it was determined that the volume would be published under the title of 'Lyrical Ballads,' on the terms stipulated in a former letter; that this volume should not contain the poem of 'Salisbury Plain,' but only an extract from it; that it should not contain the poem of 'Peter Bell,' but consist rather of sundry shorter poems, and, for the most part, of pieces more recently written. I had recommended two volumes, but one was fixed on, and that to be published anonymously. It was to be begun imme-

diately, and with the 'Ancient Mariner,' which poem I brought with me to Bristol. A day or two after, I received the following:—

"MY DEAR COTTLE,—

"'Wordsworth and I have duly weighed your proposal, and this is an answer. W. would not object to the publishing of 'Peter Bell' or the 'Salisbury Plain' singly; but to the publishing of his poems in two volumes he is decisively repugnant and oppugnant.

"'He deems that they would want variety, &c., &c. If this apply in his case, it applies with tenfold more force to mine. We deem that the volumes offered you are, to a certain degree, one work, in kind, though not in degree, as an ode is one work; and that our different poems are as stanzas good, relatively rather than absolutely: mark you, I say in kind, though not in degree. . . .

"'The picture shall be sent.* . . .

"'Cottle, my dear Cottle, I meant to have written you an Essay on the Metaphysics of Typography, but I have not time. Take a few hints, without the abstruse reasons for them, with which I mean to favour you. Eighteen lines in a page, the lines closely printed, certainly more closely printed than those of the 'Joan'† ['Oh, by all means, closer, *W. Wordsworth*'], equal ink, and large margins; that is beauty; it may even, under your immediate care, mingle the sublime! And now, my dear Cottle, may God love you and me, who am, with most unauthorish feelings, your true friend,

S. T. COLERIDGE.

"Mr W. had taken the Alfoxden House, near Stowey, for

* This refers to the earliest portrait of Wordsworth, painted in 1797, by an artist in Stowey, now the property of Mr George, Bristol.

† *Joan of Arc*, 4to, first edition, had twenty lines in a page.

one year (during the minority of the heir), and the reason why he was refused a continuance, by the ignorant man who had the letting of it, arose (as Mr Coleridge informed me) from a whimsical cause, or rather, a series of causes. The wiseacres of the village had, it seemed, made Mr W. the subject of their serious conversation. One said that, 'He had seen him wander about by night, and look rather strangely at the moon! and then, he roamed over the hills, like a partridge.' Another said, 'he had heard him mutter, as he walked, in some outlandish brogue, that nobody could understand!' Another said, 'It's useless to talk, Thomas, I think he is what people call a "wise man" [a conjuror!']. Another said, 'You are every one of you wrong. I know what he is. We have all met him, tramping away toward the sea. Would any man in his senses, take all that trouble to look at a parcel of water! I think he carries on a snug business in the smuggling line, and, in these journeys, is on the look-out for some *wet* cargo!' Another very significantly said, 'I know that he has got a private still in his cellar, for I once passed his house, at a little better than a hundred yards distance, and I could smell the spirits, as plain as an ashen fagot at Christmas!' Another said, 'However that was, he is surely a desperate French jacobin, for he is so silent and dark, that no body ever heard him say one word about politics!' And thus these ignoramuses drove from their village, a greater ornament than will ever again be found amongst them. . . .

"A visit to Mr Coleridge, at Stowey, in the year 1797, had been the means of my introduction to Mr Wordsworth. Soon after our acquaintance had commenced, Mr W. happened to be in Bristol, and asked me to spend a day or two with him at Alfoxden. I consented, and drove him down in a gig. We called for Mr Coleridge, Miss Wordsworth, and the servant, at Stowey; and they walked, while we rode on

to Mr W.'s house, (distant two or three miles), where we purposed to dine. A London alderman would smile at our bill-of-fare. It consisted of philosophers' viands, namely, a bottle of brandy, a noble loaf, and a stout piece of cheese; and as there were plenty of lettuces in the garden, with all these comforts we calculated on doing very well.

"Our fond hopes, however, were somewhat damped, by finding that our 'stout piece of cheese' had vanished! A sturdy *rat* of a beggar, whom we had relieved on the road, with his olfactories all alive no doubt, *smelt* our cheese; and, while we were gazing at the magnificent clouds, contrived to abstract our treasure! Cruel tramp! An ill return for our pence! We both wished the rind might not choke him! The mournful fact was ascertained a little before we drove into the court-yard of the house. Mr Coleridge bore the loss with great fortitude, observing, that we should never starve with a loaf of bread and a bottle of brandy. He now, with the dexterity of an adept (admired by his friends around), unbuckled the horse, and putting down the shafts with a jerk, as a triumphant conclusion of his work, lo! the bottle of brandy, that had been placed most carefully behind us, on the seat, from the inevitable law of gravity, suddenly rolled down, and before we could arrest the spirituous avalanche, pitching right on the stones, was dashed to pieces! We all beheld the spectacle, silent and petrified! We might have collected the broken fragments of glass, but, the brandy! that was gone! clean gone!

"One little untoward thing often follows another, and while the rest stood musing, chained to the place, regaling themselves with the Cogniac effluvium, and all miserably chagrined, I led the horse to the stable, when a fresh perplexity arose. I removed the harness without difficulty, but after many strenuous attempts, I could not get off the collar. In

despair, I called for assistance, when aid soon drew near. Mr W. first brought his ingenuity into exercise, but after several unsuccessful efforts, he relinquished the achievement, as altogether impracticable. Mr Coleridge now tried his hand, but showed no more grooming skill than his predecessors; for after twisting the poor horse's neck, almost to strangulation, and to the great danger of his eyes, he gave up the useless task, pronouncing that 'the horse's head must have grown (gout or dropsy !) since the collar was put on, for,' he said, 'it was a downright impossibility for such a huge *os frontis* to pass through so narrow a collar!' Just at this instant the servant girl drew near, and understanding the cause of our consternation, 'La, master,' said she, 'you do not go about the work in the right way. You should do like this,' when, turning the collar completely upside down, she slipped it off in a moment, to our great humiliation and wonderment, each satisfied afresh that there were heights of knowledge in the world to which he had not attained.

"We were now summoned to dinner, and a dinner it was, such as every blind and starving man in the three kingdoms would have rejoiced to behold. At the top of the table stood a superb brown loaf. The centre dish presented a pile of the true coss lettuces, and at the bottom appeared an empty plate, where the 'stout piece of cheese' ought to have stood (cruel mendicant !) and though the brandy was 'clean gone,' yet its place was well, if not *better* supplied by a superabundance of fine sparkling Castalian Champagne ! A happy thought at this time started into one of our minds, that some sauce would render the lettuces a little more acceptable, when an individual in the company recollected a question once propounded by the most patient of men, 'How can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt ?' and asked for a little of that valuable culinary article. 'Indeed, sir,' Betty replied, 'I quite forgot to buy salt.'

A general laugh followed the announcement, in which our host heartily joined. This was nothing. We had plenty of other good things, and while crunching our succulents, and munching our crusts, we pitied the far worse condition of those, perchance as hungry as ourselves, who were forced to dine alone off æther. For our next meal, the mile-off village furnished all that could be desired, and these trifling incidents present the sum and the result of half the little passing disasters of life." *

On the 26th of June the Wordsworths left Alfoxden, spent a farewell week with Coleridge at Stowey, another week with Cottle in Bristol (arranging details about the forthcoming volume), and then left for that short ramble up the Wye, with which the *Lines on Tintern Abbey* are for ever associated. It is thus that Wordsworth narrates it:—

"We left Alfoxden on Monday morning, the 26th of June, stayed with Coleridge till the Monday following, then set forth on foot towards Bristol. We were at Cottle's for a week, and thence we went toward the banks of the Wye. We crossed the Severn Ferry, and walked ten miles further to Tintern Abbey, a very beautiful ruin on the Wye. The next morning we walked along the river through Monmouth to Goodrich Castle, there slept, and returned the next day to Tintern, thence to Chepstow, and from Chepstow back again in a boat to Tintern, where we slept, and thence back in a small vessel to Bristol.

"The Wye is a stately and majestic river from its width and depth, but never slow and sluggish; you can always hear its murmur. It travels through a woody country, now varied with cottages and green meadows, and now with huge and fantastic rocks." †

* See Cottle's *Early Recollections*, vol. i., pp. 309-324.

† See *Memoirs*, vol. i., pp. 116, 117.

His own account of the Lines on Tintern Abbey is as follows:—

"No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol. It was published almost immediately after, in the little volume of which so much has been said in these notes." *

"After the Wye tour," Wordsworth and his sister took up their abode at Bristol, "in order," says the late Bishop of Lincoln, † "that he might be nearer the printer." His sister wrote, July 18th, 1798: "William's poems are now in the press; they will be out in six weeks. They are in one small volume, without the name of the author; their title is 'Lyrical Ballads, with other Poems.'"

"On August 27," adds Bishop Wordsworth, "they"—i.e., the poet and his sister—"had arrived in London, having passed Oxford and Blenheim. In a few days the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared; and on the 16th September, Wordsworth, his sister, and Mr Coleridge left Yarmouth for Hamburgh."

* Compare the Fenwick note to the poem.

† See *Memoirs*, vol. ii., p. 120.

CHAPTER XI.

HAMBURGH AND GOSLAR.

THE voyage from Yarmouth to Hamburgh is graphically described by Coleridge in *Satyran's Letters*. In his imaginary conversation with the Dane, Coleridge's humour is at its best. His reference to the "single, solitary, wild duck," swimming in "that round, objectless desert of waters," and his description of the scenery during the sail from Cuxhaven up the Elbe to Altona, may be compared with Dorothy Wordsworth's shorter jottings in her Journal. This Journal is only the record of the two days spent in crossing the North Sea, and sixteen days spent in Hamburgh and its vicinity. A Journal would probably be kept of the winter at Goslar, but I have not seen it.

The incidents of that winter were few, and may be stated in a paragraph; but there are passages in the Journal which deserve a place by themselves.

The party reached Hamburgh on the 18th September, spent eight or ten days in studying the people and the place, had introductions to Mr Klopstock, the brother of the poet, met the latter at his brother's house, and had long conversations with him—of which Wordsworth afterwards wrote out extensive notes, which Coleridge reproduced in *The Friend*, and in the *Biographia Literaria*.

After a week's residence in Hamburgh, Coleridge—whose chief aim in coming to Germany was the acquisition of the German language—went on to Ratzeburg, a small town on the road to Lubeck, about thirty-five miles to the north-east

of Hamburg, a place recommended to him by Klopstock, who gave him an introduction to the Amtmann. He left Hamburg, on Sunday the 23rd, apparently alone, and being satisfied with Ratzeburg, and the pastor—to whom the Amtmann sent him—returned to Hamburg on the 27th, to say good-bye to the Wordsworths, with whom his friend Chester had remained during his four days' absence. On the 1st October Coleridge and Chester went back to Ratzeburg, where they staid four months; and on the 3rd, Wordsworth and his sister left Hamburg, by the Brunswick coach for Goslar.

Coleridge's account of the days spent at Hamburg, and of his visit with Wordsworth to Klopstock's house beyond the city gates, is much more graphic than his friend's letter on the same subject to Thomas Poole, or his sister's Journal.* The beauty and singularity of one sunset in particular, which they saw together on leaving Klopstock's house—and its effect on the objects around—at once broke the thread of their talk on the old poet they had left.

"There were woods in the distance. A rich sandy light (nay, of a much deeper colour than sandy) lay over these woods that blackened in the blaze. Over that part of the woods which lay* immediately under the intenser light a brassy mist floated. The trees on the ramparts, and the people moving to and fro between them, were cut or divided into equal segments of deep shade and brassy light. Had the trees, and the bodies of the men and women, been divided into equal segments by a rule or pair of compasses, the portions could not have been more regular. All else was obscure. It was a fairy scene," &c. †

* Coleridge's description of the lakes of Ratzeburg in winter, and the skating there (see *The Friend*, Essay iii.), is one of the finest he ever wrote, and almost equal to the skating scene in *The Prelude*.

† See Satyrane's Letters, *Biog. Lit.*, vol. ii., p. 241.

The following are extracts from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal of the days spent at Hamburgh:—

“Quitted London, Friday, 14th September 1798. Arrived at Yarmouth on Saturday noon, and sailed on Sunday morning at eleven o'clock. Before we heaved the anchor I was consigned to the cabin, which I did not quit till we were in still water at the mouth of the Elbe, on Tuesday morning at ten o'clock. I was surprised to find, when I came upon deck, that we could not see the shores, though we were in the river. It was to my eyes a still sea. But oh! the gentle breezes and the gentle motion! . . . As we advanced towards Cuxhaven the shores appeared low and flat, and thinly peopled; here and there a farm-house, cattle feeding, hay-stacks, a cottage, a windmill. Some vessels were at anchor at Cuxhaven, an ugly, black-looking place. Dismissed a part of our crew, and proceeded in the packet-boat up the river.

“Cast anchor between six and seven o'clock. The moon shone upon the waters. The shores were visible rock; here and there a light from the houses. Ships lying at anchor not far from us. We drank tea upon deck by the light of the moon. I enjoyed solitude and quietness, and many a recollected pleasure, hearing still the unintelligible jargon of the many tongues that gabbled in the cabin. Went to bed between ten and eleven. The party playing at cards, but they were silent, and suffered us to go to sleep. At four o'clock in the morning we were awakened by the heaving of the anchor, and till seven, in the intervals of sleep, I enjoyed the thought that we were advancing towards Hamburgh; but what was our mortification on being told that there was a thick fog, and that we could not sail till it was dispersed. I went on to the deck. The air was cold and wet, the decks streaming, the shores invisible, no hope of

At ten however the sun appeared, and we

saw the green shores. All became clear, and we set sail. Churches very frequent on the right, with spires red, blue, sometimes green; houses thatched or tiled, and generally surrounded with low trees. A beautiful low green island, houses, and wood. As we advanced, the left bank of the river became more interesting.

"The houses warm and comfortable, sheltered with trees, and neatly painted. Blankanese, a village or town scattered over the sides of three hills, woody where the houses lie and sleep down below, the houses half-concealed by, and half-obtruding themselves from, the low trees. Naked boats with masts lying at the bare feet of the Blankanese hills. Houses more and more frequent as we approach Hamburgh. The banks of the Elbe more steep. Some gentlemen's seats after the English fashion. The spires of Altona and Hamburgh visible a considerable time. At Altona we took a boat, and rowed through the narrow passages of the Elbe, crowded with vessels of all nations. Landed at the Boom House, where we were received by porters, ready to carry our luggage to any part of the town. William went to seek lodgings, and the rest of the party guarded the luggage. Two boats were about to depart. An elegant English carriage was placed in one, and presently a very pretty woman, conducted by a gentleman, seated herself in it, and they rowed off. The other contained a medley crew of all ages. There was an old woman, with a blue cap trimmed with broad silver lace, and tied under her chin. She had a short coloured cloak, &c. While we stood in the street, which was open on one side to the Elbe, I was much amused by the various employments and dresses of the people who passed before us. . . . There were Dutch women with immense straw bonnets, with flat crowns and rims in the shape of oyster shells, without trimming, or with only a plain riband round the crown, and literally as large as a small-sized

umbrella. Hamburger girls with white caps, with broad over-hanging borders, crimped and stiff, and long lappets of riband. Hanoverians with round borders, showing all the face, and standing upright, a profusion of riband. . . . Fruit-women, with large straw hats in the shape of an inverted bowl, or white handkerchiefs tied round the head like a bishop's mitre. Jackets the most common, often the petticoat and jacket of different colours. The ladies without hats, in dresses of all fashions. Soldiers with dull-looking red coats, and immense cocked hats. The men little differing from the English, except that they have generally a pipe in their mouths. After waiting about an hour we saw Wm. appear. Two porters carried our luggage upon a sort of wheelbarrow, and we were conducted through dirty, ill-paved streets to an inn, where, with great difficulty, and after long seeking, lodgings had been procured for us.

“Breakfasted with Mons. de Loutre. Chester and I went to the promenade. People of all ranks, and in various dresses, walking backwards and forwards. Ladies with small baskets hanging on their arms, long shawls of various colours thrown over their shoulders. The women of the lower order dressed with great modesty. . . . Went to the French theatre in the evening. . . . The piece a mixture of dull declamation and unmeaning rant. The ballet unintelligible to us, as the story was carried on in singing. The body of the house very imperfectly lighted, which has a good effect in bringing out the stage, but the acting was not very amusing. . . .

“*Sunday*.—William went in the boat to Harburgh. In our road to the boat we looked into one of the large churches. Service was just ended. The audience appeared to be simply composed of singing boys dressed in large ked hats, and a few old women who sat in the aisles. . .

Met many bright-looking girls with white caps, carrying black prayer-books in their hands. . . . Coleridge went to Razeberg at five o'clock in the diligence. Chester accompanied me towards Altona. The streets wide and pleasant in that quarter of the town. Immense crowds of people walking for pleasure, and many pleasure-waggons passing and re-passing. Passed through a nest of Jews. Were invited to view an exhibition of waxwork. The theatres open, and the billiard-tables attended. The walks very pleasing between Hamburg and Altona. A large piece of ground planted with trees, and intersected by gravel walks. Music, cakes, fruit, carriages, and foot-passengers of all descriptions. A very good view of the shipping, and of Altona and the town and spires of Hamburg. I could not but remark how much the prospect would have suffered by one of our English canopies of coal smoke. The ground on the opposite side of the Elbe appears marshy. There are many little canals or lines of water. While the sun was yet shining pleasantly, we were obliged to blink perpetually to turn our eyes to the church clock. The gates are shut at half-past six o'clock, and there is no admittance into the city after that time. This idea deducts much from the pleasure of an evening walk. You are haunted by it long before the time has elapsed. . . .

"Wednesday.—Dined with Mr Klopstock. Had the pleasure of meeting his brother the poet, a venerable old man, retaining the liveliness and alertness of youth, though he evidently cannot be very far from the grave. . . . The party talked with much interest of the French comedy, and seemed fond of music. The poet and his lady were obliged to depart soon after six. He sustained an animated conversation with William during the whole afternoon. Poor old man! I could not look upon him, the benefactor of his country, the father of German poetry, without emotion. . . .

"During my residence in *Hamburgh* I have never seen anything like a quarrel in the streets but once, and that was so trifling that it would scarcely have been noticed in *England*. . . . In the shops (except the established booksellers and stationers) I have constantly observed a disposition to cheat, and take advantage of our ignorance of the language and money. . . .

"*Thursday, 28th September.*—William and I set forward at twelve o'clock to *Altona*. . . . The *Elbe* in the vicinity of *Hamburgh* is so divided, and spread out, that the country looks more like a plain overflowed by heavy rain than the bed of a great river. We went about a mile and a half beyond *Altona*; the roads dry and sandy, and a causeway for foot-passengers. . . . The houses on the banks of the *Elbe*, chiefly of brick, seemed very warm and well built. . . .

"The small cottage houses seemed to have little gardens, and all the gentlemen's houses were surrounded by gardens quaintly disposed in beds and curious knots, with ever-twisting gravel walks and bending poplars. The view of the *Elbe* and the spreading country must be very interesting in a fine sunset. There is a want of some atmospherical irradiation to give a richness to the view. On returning home we were accosted by the first beggar whom we have seen since our arrival at *Hamburgh*.

"*Friday, 28th.*—Sought Coleridge at the bookseller's, and went to the Promenade. . . . All the *Hamburghers* full of Admiral Nelson's victory.

"Called at a baker's shop. Put two shillings into the baker's hands, for which I was to have had four small rolls. He gave me two. I let him understand that I was to have four, and with this view I took one shilling from him, pointed to it and to two loaves, and at the same time offering it to him. Again I took up two others. In a savage manner he half knocked the rolls out of my hand,

and when I asked him for the other shilling he refused to return it, and would neither suffer me to take bread, nor give me back my money, and on these terms I quitted the shop. I am informed that it is the boast and glory of these people to cheat strangers, that when a feat of this kind is successfully performed the man goes from the shop into his house, and triumphantly relates it to his wife and family. The Hamburger shopkeepers have three sorts of weights, and a great part of their skill, as shopkeepers, consists in calculating upon the knowledge of the buyer, and suiting him with scales accordingly. . . .

"*Saturday, 29th September.*—The grand festival of the Hamburgers, dedicated to Saint Michael, observed with solemnity, but little festivity. Perhaps this might be partly owing to the raininess of the evening. In the morning the churches were opened very early. St Christopher's was quite full between eight and nine o'clock. It is a large heavy-looking building, immense, without either grandeur or beauty; built of brick, and with few windows. . . . There are some pictures, . . . one of the Saint fording the river with Christ upon his back—a giant figure, which amused me not a little. . . . Walked with Coleridge and Chester upon the promenade. . . . We took places in the morning in the Brunswick coach for Wednesday.

"*Sunday, 1st October.*—Coleridge and Chester went to Ratzeberg at seven o'clock in the morning. . . . William and I set forward at half-past eleven with an intention of going to Blankanese. . . . The buildings all seem solid and warm in themselves, but still they look cold from their nakedness of trees. They are generally newly built, and placed in gardens, which are planted in front with poplars and low shrubs, but the possessors seem to have no prospective view to a shelter for their children. They do not plant behind their houses. All the buildings of this character are

near the road which runs at different distances from the edge of the bank which rises from the river. This bank is generally steep, scattered over with trees which are either not of ancient growth, or from some cause do not thrive, but serve very well to shelter and often conceal the more humble dwellings, which are close to the sandy bank of the river.

. . We saw many carriages. In one of them was Klopstock, the poet. There are many inns and eating-houses by the roadside. We went to a pretty village, or nest of houses about a league from Blankanese, and beyond to a large open field, enclosed on one side with oak trees, through which winds a pleasant gravel walk. On the other it is open to the river. . . . When we were within about a mile and a half or two miles of Altona, we turned out of the road to go down to the river, and pursued our way along the path that leads from house to house. These houses are low, never more than two storeys high, built of brick, or a mixture of brick and wood, and thatched or tiled. They have all window-shutters, which are painted frequently a grey light green, but always painted. We were astonished at the excessive neatness which we observed in the arrangement of everything within these houses. They have all window curtains as white as snow; the floors of all that we saw were perfectly clean, and the brass vessels as bright as a mirror. . . . I imagine these houses are chiefly inhabited by sailors, pilots, boat-makers, and others whose business is upon the water.

"Monday, Oct. 2nd.—William called at Klopstock's to inquire the road into Saxony. Bought Burgher's poems, the price 6 marks. Sate an hour at Remnant's. Bought Percy's ancient poetry, 14 marks. Walked on the ramparts; morning."

as recorded in *Satyrane's Letters* the interview
1 the Wordsworths had with the poet Klop-

stock; and the details of the conversation—which Coleridge could scarcely follow, as it was carried on in French—are given in the *Biographia Literaria*, as an extract from Wordsworth's notes. As there are some curious differences between the original and the transcript, it may be worth while to quote a considerable portion of the former, more especially as its earlier paragraphs are entirely omitted by Coleridge. It will be observed, however, by those who take the trouble to look into *Satyrane's Letters*, that some sentences—like Wordsworth's remarks about old men wearing powder—are placed in a new connection, and glorified by Coleridge.*

"Mr Klopstock took us to see his brother, the Poet, who lives about a quarter of a mile out of the town. In choosing his residence, the poet does not seem to have been influenced by poetic ideas. His house is one amongst a range of commonplace houses, with four or five rows of trees of a few years' growth before the windows, beyond which is a green, and dead flat intersected with several roads, but no object whatsoever to interest the eye. We were ushered into a plain decent room, ornamented with a few drawings or plates, I believe from the *Messiah*, and the figures of two of the Muses. We had not been here two minutes before the Poet himself made his appearance. I was somewhat disappointed in his countenance, in which I was not able to discover the marks either of sublimity or enthusiasm. We began a conversation in French upon the events which had just taken place in Ireland. He spoke with great liveliness and spirit upon the surrender of the detachment of French troops under General Steinbert; and their proceedings with

* I am, of course, unable to say whether the "glorification" was Coleridge's or his editor's. This may be explained in the forthcoming *Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, by his grandson.

regard to the committee which they had appointed, and the rest of their organising system, seem to have given him great entertainment. He said they had in the German language no history of German poetry. He did not appear to have regularly studied the poetry of his country before his own time. He preferred the blank verse of Glover * (each verse separately considered) to that of Milton, but agreed with me that the true harmony of blank verse consisted in the periods, and not in a succession of musical lines. He showed us a new edition of his works, which is printing at Leipzig, and read us some passages from his Odes, in which he has adopted the Latin measures. I must cordially avow that my ear was unable to discover the movement in the specimen which he read us. He said he had read a translation of Milton when he was fourteen years old. He spoke with great animation of the powers of the German language, particularly on the score of compression. He observed that his first Ode was fifty years older than the last. He is now in his seventy-fourth year. His teeth are almost entirely gone, yet he expresses himself with the liveliness of a girl of seventeen. This is striking to an Englishman, and rendered him an interesting object, and such I found him, notwithstanding his enormous powdered and frizzelled wig. By-the-bye, old men ought never to wear powder. The contrast between a large snow white wig and the colour of an old man's skin is disgusting, and wrinkles in such a neighbourhood appear only channels for dirt. Coleridge spoke of a work which he wished to execute, namely, a history of German poetry, and added, that he hoped to have the pleasure of translating some of his Odes as specimens. He begged that if he did so, he would likewise give some fragments of the *Messiah*, to revenge him of the

* The author of an epic, *Leonidas*, 1737.

man who had made so execrable, so detestable a translation of that work. He spoke with much feeling on this subject.

"He mentioned Ebert's translation of *Leonidas* and Young's *Night Thoughts* as the best translation from the English which they had. By-the-bye, Ebert was his particular friend. He wished to see the *Calvary* of Cumberland, and wished to know what we thought of it in England.

"Went to Remnant's, the English bookseller, where I procured the *Analytical Review*, in which is contained the review of C.'s *Calvary*. I remember to have read there some specimens of a blank verse translation of the *Messiah*. I have mentioned this to Mr K., and he had a great desire to have a sight of them. I walked over to his house, and put the book into his hand. We talked of Admiral Nelson's rumoured victory. He was all faith; I had my doubts. . . . He began the *Messiah* when he was seventeen years old. He devoted three entire years to the plan, without composing a single word. He was greatly at a loss in what manner to execute his work. There were no successful specimens of versification in the German language before his time. The first three cantos he wrote in a species of measured or murmurous prose. This, though done with much labour and some success, was far from satisfying him. He had composed translations, both Latin and Greek, as a school exercise; and there had been also, in the German language, attempts in that style of versification. These were only of moderate merit. One day he was struck with the idea of trying what could be done in this way. He kept his room a whole day, even went without his dinner, and found that in the evening he had written twenty-three hexameters, versifying a part of what he had before written in prose. From that time, pleased with his efforts, he composed no

more prose. To-day he informed me that he had finished his poem before he had read Milton. He was enchanted to see an author who, before him, had trod the same path. This is a contradiction of what he had said before. He did not wish to speak of his poem to anyone till it was finished, but some of his friends, who had seen what he had completed, tormented him till he consented to publish a few books in a journal. He was then, I believe, very young, about twenty-five. The rest was finished at different periods, four books at a time. The reception given to the first specimen was highly flattering. He was near thirty years in finishing the whole poem, but of those thirty years not more than two were employed in the composition. He only composed in favourable moments; besides, he had other occupations. He values himself on the plans of his Odes, and accuses the modern lyrical writers of gross deficiency in this respect. I laid the same accusation against Horace. He would not hear of it; but we waived the discussion. He called Rousseau's *Ode to Fortune* a moral dissertation in stanzas. I spoke of Dryden's *Cecilia*, but he did not seem familiar with our writers.

"He wished to know the distinctions between our dramatic and epic blank verse. He recommended to me to read his drama on the story of Aso——, before I read either his Messiah or his Odes. He flattered himself that some time or other these would be known in England. He had not heard of Cowper. He thought that Voss, in his translation of the *Iliad*, had done violence to the idiom of the German, and had sacrificed it to the Greek, not remembering sufficiently that each language has its particular spirit and genius. He said that Lessing was the first of their dramatic authors. I complained of Nathan as tedious. He said there was not enough of action in it, but that Lessing was the most chaste of their writers. He spoke favourably

of Goethe, but said that his *Sorrows of Werther* was his best work, better than any of his dramas. He preferred the first written to the rest of Goethe's dramas.

"Schiller's *Robbers* he found so extravagant that he could not read it. I spoke of the scene of the setting sun: he did not know it; he said Schiller could not live. He thought *Don Carlos* might be the best of his dramas, but said the plot was inextricable. It was evident that he knew little of Schiller's works; indeed, he said he could not read them. Bürger, he said, was a true poet, and would live; but Schiller, on the contrary, must soon be forgotten, because he gave himself up to the imitation of Shakespeare. *He* was often extravagant, but Schiller was ten thousand times more so. He spoke very slightly of Kotzebue, as an immoral author in the first place, and next as deficient in power. At Vienna, said he, they are transported with him, but we do not reckon the people of Vienna either the wisest or the wittiest people of Germany.

"He said Wieland was a charming author, and a sovereign master of his own language; that, in this respect, Goethe could not be compared to him, or, indeed, anybody else. He said that his fault was to be fertile to exuberance. I told him the *Oberon* had just been translated into English. He asked if I was not delighted with the poem. I answered that I thought the story began to flag about the seventh or eighth book, and observed that it was unworthy of a man of genius to make the interest of a long poem turn entirely upon animal gratification. He seemed at first disposed to excuse him, by saying that there are different subjects for poetry, and that poets are not to be restricted in their choice. I answered that I thought the passion of Love as well suited to the purposes of poetry as any other passion, but that it was a cheap way of pleasing to

fix the attention of the reader through a long poem on mere animal enjoyment. Well, but, said he, such poems please everybody. I answered, that it was the province of a great poet to raise people up to his own level, not to descend to theirs. He agreed, and confessed that on no account whatsoever would he have written a work like the *Oberon*. He spoke in raptures of Wieland's style, and pointed out the passage where Amanda is delivered of her child as exquisitely beautiful. I said that I did not perceive any very striking passages in the poem, but that I made allowance for the imperfections of a translation.

"Of the thefts of Wieland he said they were so exquisitely managed that the greatest writer might be proud to steal as he did. He considered the books and fables of the old Roman writers in the light of the ancient mythology, as a sort of common property, from which a man was free to take whatever he could make a good use of. An Englishman had presented him with the *Odes* of Collins. He had read them with pleasure. He seemed to know little or nothing of Gray, except his *Churchyard*. He complained of 'the fool' in *Lear*. I observed that he seemed to give a terrible wildness to the distress; that might be; but still he complained. Upon the whole, he did not seem to be at all familiar with our writers. He asked whether it was not allowed that Pope had written a hymn with more skill than any of our writers. I said I preferred Dryden, because his couplets had greater variety in their movement. He thought my reason a good one, but asked whether the rhymes of Pope were not more exact. This question I understood as applying to the final terminations, and I observed to him that I believe it was the case; but that I thought it was easy to excuse some inaccuracies in the final sounds, if the general sweep of the verse was superior.

"I told him that we were not so exact with regard to the

final endings of lines as the French; he did not seem to know that we made no distinction between masculine and feminine rhymes,—at least he put inquiries to me on this subject. He seemed to think that no language could ever be so far formed that it might not be enriched by idioms borrowed from another tongue. I said I thought this a very dangerous practice, and told him that I thought Milton had often injured both his prose and his verse by taking this liberty too frequently. I recommended to him the prose works of Dryden as models of pure and native English. I was treading on tender ground, as I have reason to suppose that he has himself liberally indulged in the practice I took upon me to condemn."

On the 3rd October 1798, Wordsworth, still living at Hamburgh, wrote thus to his friend Thomas Poole, at Nether Stowey :—

HAMBURG, *October 3rd* [1798].

"MY DEAR POOLE,—It was my intention to have written to you from England, to bid you farewell. I was prevented by procrastination, and I now take up the pen to assure you that my sister and myself both retain the most lively recollection of the many kindnesses which we have received from you and your family. I believe my letter would be more acceptable to you if, instead of speaking on this subject, I should tell you what we have seen during our fortnight's residence at Hamburg. It is a *sad* place. In this epithet you have the soul and essence of all the information which I have been able to gather. We have, however, been treated with unbounded kindness by Mr Klopstock, the brother of the poet; and I have no doubt this city contains a world of good and honest people, if one had but the

skill to find them. I will relate to you an anecdote. The other day I* went into a baker's shop, put into his hand two pieces of money, for which I ought to have had five loaves, but I thought the pieces had only been worth two loaves each. I took up four loaves. The baker would not permit this, upon which I took from his hand one of the pieces, and pointed to two leaves, and then, re-offering to him the piece, I took up two others. He dashed the loaves from my hand into the basket in the most brutal manner. I begged him to return the other piece of money, which he refused to do, nor would he let me have any bread into the bargain. So I left the shop empty-handed, and he retained the money. Is there any baker in England who would have done this to a foreigner? I am afraid we must say, yes. Money, money is here the god of universal worship, and rapacity and extortion among the lower classes, and the classes immediately above them; and just sufficiently common to be a matter of glory and exultation.

"The situation of the town is, upon the whole, pleasant; the ramparts present many agreeable views of the river and the adjoining country. The banks of the Elbe are thickly sown with houses, built by the merchants for Saturday and Sunday retirement. The English merchants have set the example; the style is in imitation of the English garden, imitated as Della Crusca might imitate Virgil. It is, however, something gained, the dawning of a better day.

"We set off this evening by the diligence for Brunswick. We shall be two days and two nights constantly travelling in a vehicle, compared with which Tanlin's long coach is a very chariot of the gods—patience! patience! We have one comfort travelling in this way, a very great one for the poor, viz., that we cannot be cheated. Coleridge has most likely informed you that he and Chester have settled at

* It happened to his sister, not to himself.

Ratzeburg. Dorothy and I are going to speculate further up in the country.

"I have seen Klopstock, the poet. There is nothing remarkable either in his conversation or appearance, except his extreme gaiety, with legs swelled as thick as your thigh. He is in his seventy-fourth year. He began his *Messiah* at seventeen,—not the composition, for the plan employed him three years.

"I sent a copy of my tragedy by Wade. Ward will transcribe it as soon as he can, and you have the goodness to transmit the original to Wade. It is in a sad incorrect state. Ward must use his best eyes and his best sagacity in deciphering it. Pray have the goodness to remove those boxes of ours from that damp room at Mr Coleridge's, and lodge them in some perfectly dry place at Stowey. I could wish also that they might be well aired, I mean on the outside, as I am afraid the things may have already sustained some injury. Either let them be put in the sunshine, or before a large fire.

"My sister joins me in kindest remembrances to yourself, and your mother, not forgetting Ward. I hope Mrs Coleridge is well, and the children.—Yours most affectionately,

"WM. WORDSWORTH.

"I have one word to say about Alfoxden: pray, keep your eye upon it. If any series of accidents should bring it again into the market, we should be glad to have it, if we could manage it."

Having seen all of Hamburgh that they cared to see, and the autumn rapidly advancing, the Wordsworths pushed on to their selected winter-quarters at Goslar. Dorothy Wordsworth thus describes their journey from Hamburgh to Goslar:—

"We quitted Hamburg on Wednesday evening, at five

o'clock, reached Luneburg to breakfast on Thursday, and arrived at Brunswick between three and four o'clock on Friday evening. . . . There we dined. It is an old, silent, dull-looking place; the duke's palace a large white building, with no elegance in its external appearance. The next morning we set off at eight. You can have no idea of the badness of the roads. The diligence arrived at eight at night at the city of Goslar, on Saturday October 6, the distance being only twenty-five miles."

It was a dreary town, on the edge of the Hartz forest, which had once been an imperial residence, where the old Franciscan Emperors used to keep court; and though not without traces of its old magnificence, it was now deserted and forlorn-looking. The Wordsworths selected Goslar that they might, if possible, see some German society, while they learned the language, in a quiet town. They made a mistake, however, in choosing Goslar as their retreat. From its very seclusion, it was less hospitable to foreign residents than a larger and busier town would have been;* and the Wordsworths did not make friends easily. Coleridge told his friend that two things stood in the way of his getting to know the people, viz., that he was not alone, and that he detested tobacco. "You have two things against you: your not loving smoke; and your sister. If the manners at Goslar resemble those at Ratzeburg, it is almost necessary to be able to bear smoke. Can Dorothy endure smoke? Here, when my friends come to see me, the candle nearly goes out, the air is so thick."

From Goslar Miss Wordsworth wrote:—"Coleridge is very happily situated at Ratzeburg for learning the language.

* It is said that at the time of the Treaty of Augsburg, Goslar was so much divided into parties, that its church was put at the service of the Lutherans on Sundays, and of the Roman Catholics on week days. (See *Early Years and late Reflections*, by Clement Carlyon, p. 115.)

are not fortunately situated here, with respect to the attainment of our main object, a knowledge of the language. We have, indeed, gone on improving in that respect, but not so expeditiously as we might have done: for there is no society at Goslar, it is a lifeless town; and it seems that here, in Germany, a man travelling alone may do very well, but, if his sister or wife goes with him, he must give entertainments. So we content ourselves with talking to the people of the house, &c.,* and reading German. William is very industrious. His mind is always active; indeed, too much so. He over-wearies himself, and suffers from pain and weakness in the side. . . . We have plenty of dry walks; but Goslar is very cold in winter."

That particular winter—1798-9—is said to have been the coldest known in Europe during the whole of the eighteenth century.

The Fenwick note to the *Lines written in Germany*, gives so vivid a picture of their life at Goslar, that it may be reproduced here:—

"A bitter winter it was when these verses were composed by the side of my sister, in our lodgings, at a draper's house, in the romantic imperial town of Goslar, on the edge of the Hartz Forest. So severe was the cold of this winter, that when we passed out of the parlour warmed by the stove, our cheeks were struck by the air as by cold iron. I slept in a room over a passage that was not ceiled. The people of the house used to say, rather unfeelingly, that they expected I should be frozen to death some night; but with the protection of a pelisse lined with fur, and a dog's-skin bonnet, such as was worn by the peasants, I walked daily on the ramparts, or on a sort of public ground or garden, in which was a pond. Here I had no companion but a kingfisher, a

* Coleridge addressed them, "Chez Madame le Veuve Dippérmaer."

beautiful creature that used to glance by me. I consequently became much attached to it. During these walks I composed *The Poet's Epitaph*."

Residence in Germany did much more for Coleridge than for Wordsworth. Coleridge mastered the German language; and the vast storehouses of its literature were opened up to him, in such a way, that his translation of *Wallenstein* has merits of a very high order.* Wordsworth did not learn a language so easily as Coleridge did. His nature was less plastic, less adaptable to fresh surroundings. Besides, he really did not care for the toil of learning a language while his mind was being borne forward with the new creative impulse it had received at Alfoxden.

The winter at Goslar was, however, an eminently productive one to Wordsworth. He not only composed the lines on *Nutting*, *The Poet's Epitaph*, *The Fountain*, the *Two April Mornings*, *Ruth*, and a whole series of poems on *Lucy*—including the lyric written in the Hartz Forest, beginning,

"Three years she grew, in sun and shower"—

but he also planned out and began the composition of *The Prelude*, and sent portions of it to Coleridge at Ratzeburg, such as the lines on "The Boy of Windermere."

Absence from his own country in that cold season, and amongst the unsympathetic burghers of Goslar, had a curious effect on Wordsworth. It not only drove him back on his former life, and stirred him up to memorialise the scenes and incidents of his native land, but it led him to think of writing his own life in verse; and during that winter he

* Some have even preferred it to the original. Schiller sent over a copy of his *Wallenstein* to Bell, the London publisher, for translation, before it was finally arranged for the press in Germany. This was passed on to Longman, who gave it to Coleridge to translate. Schiller revised the translation himself, and so faithfully had it been done, that, were the German text lost, it has been said that it could almost be recovered by re-translating the English version.

blocked out the large design of *The Recluse* (as he narrates at length in his Preface to *The Excursion*), and kept it before him as the months passed on.

In *The Prelude* * he tells us of his life

“when, from the melancholy walls
Of Goslar, once imperial, I renewed
My daily walk along that wide champaign,
That, reaching to her gates, spreads east and west,
And northwards, from beneath the mountainous verge
Of the Hercynian forest.”

The evidence is clear, however, that he had planned out the larger poem, to which *The Prelude* was to be only the introduction, at Goslar; and that he had then resolved to address it to Coleridge is, I think, also evident.

The first lines of *The Prelude* were composed as he left the old imperial city, on the 10th of February 1799. They were written on his way to visit Coleridge, who had then removed to Göttingen; and the first forty-five lines were murmured out that day.

“O there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while it fans my cheek
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.
Whate'er its mission, the soft breeze can come
To none more grateful than to me; escaped
From the vast city, where I long had pined
A discontented sojourner: now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.”

The breeze that met him was a symbol of the “correspondent breeze” which he felt would work within him. He speaks of himself then, as having

“A heart
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty;”

and he looked forward to finding, after the long-continued frost of mind and body during that Goslar winter,

* See Book viii.

"Days of sweet leisure, taxed with patient thought
 Abstruse, nor wanting punctual service high,
 Matins and vespers of harmonious verse."

The lines on the *Boy of Windermere* beginning—

"There was a Boy : ye knew him well, ye cliffs
 And islands of Winander,"

he had already sent in MS. to Coleridge, at Ratzburg, who wrote in reply : "The blank lines gave me as much direct pleasure as was possible, in the general bustle of pleasure with which I received and read your letter. I observed, I remember, that the 'fingers woven,' &c., only puzzled me; and though I liked the twelve or fourteen first lines very well, yet I liked the remainder much better. Well, now I have read them again, they are very beautiful, and leave an affecting impression. That

'Uncertain heaven received
 Into the bosom of the steady lake,'

I should have recognised any where; and had I met these lines running wild in the deserts of Arabia, I should have instantly screamed out 'Wordsworth!'" He refers to the possibility of their again living near each other in England, and says, "I am sure I need not say how you are incorporated into the better part of my being; how, whenever I spring forward into the future with noble affections, I always alight by your side."

The following, in reference to German hexameters, is taken from two of Coleridge's letters, written at this time, to Wordsworth :—

"With regard to measures, I am convinced that *our* language is, in some instances, better adapted to these metres than the *German*, e.g., '*a*' and '*the*' are better short syllables than '*ein*' and '*der*;' '*not*' than '*nicht*.' . . . Is the German, in truth, adapted to these metres? I grievously suspect that it is all pure pedantry. Some advantages there,

doubtless, are, for we cannot fall foul of any thing without advantages.

“As to the German hexameters, they have in their very essence grievous defects. It is possible and probable that we receive organically very little pleasure from the Greek and Latin hexameters; for, most certainly, *we* read all the spondees as iambics or trochees. But then the words have a fixed quantity. We know it; and there is an effect produced in the brain similar to harmony without passing through the ear-hole. The same words, with different meanings, rhyming in Italian, is a close analogy. I suspect that great part of the pleasure derived from Virgil consists in this satisfaction of the judgment. ‘Majestate manûs’ begins an hexameter; and a very good beginning it is. ‘Majestate magnâ’ is read exactly in the same manner, yet that were a false quantity; and a schoolmaster would conceit that it offended his *ear*. Secondly, the words having fixed quantities in Latin, the lines are always of equal length in *time*; but in German, what is now a spondee is in the next line only two-thirds of a dactyl. Thirdly, women all dislike the hexameters with whom I have talked. They say, and in my opinion they say truly, that only the two last feet have any discernible melody; and when the liberty of two spondees, ‘Jovis incrementum,’ is used, it is absolute prose.

“When I was ill and wakeful, I composed some English hexameters:—

‘William, my teacher, my friend! dear William and dear Dorothea!
Smooth out the folds of my letter, and place it on desk or on table;
Place it on table or desk; and your right hands loosely half-closing,
Gently sustain them in air, and extending the digit didactic,
Rest it a moment on each of the forks of the five-forkèd left hand,
Twice on the breadth of the thumb, and once on the tip of each
finger;
Read with a nod of the head in a humouring recitativo;
And, as I live, you will see my hexameters hopping before you.

This is a galloping measure ; a hop, and a trot, and a gallop !
 All my hexameters fly, like stags pursued by the stag-hounds,
 Breathless, and panting, and ready to drop, yet still flying onwards.
 I would full fain pull in my hard-mouthed runaway hunter ;
 But our English Spondeans are clumsy yet impotent curb-reins ;
 And so to make him go slowly, no way have I left but to lame him.

‘ William, my head and my heart ! dear Poet that feelest and
 thinkest !

Dorothy, eager of soul, my most affectionate sister !
 Many a mile, O ! many a wearisome mile are ye distant,
 Long, long, comfortless roads, with no one eye that doth know us.
 O ! it is all too far to send to you mockeries idle :

Oh ! what a life is the eye ! what a fine and inscrutable essence !
 Him that is utterly blind, nor glimpses the fire that warms him ;
 Him that never beheld the swelling breast of his mother ;
 Him that ne’er smiled at the bosom as babe that smiles in its
 slumber ;

Even to him it exists, it stirs and moves in its prison ;
 Lives with a separate life, and “ Is it the spirit ? ” he murmurs :
 Sure, it has thoughts of its own, and to see is only its language.’

“ There was a great deal more, which I have forgotten,
 as I never wrote it down. No doubt, much better might
 be written ; but these will still give you some idea of them.
 The last line which I wrote I remember, and write it for
 the truth of the sentiment, scarcely less true in company
 than in pain and solitude ;—

‘ William, my head and my heart ! dear William and dear Dorothea !
 You have all in each other ; but I am lonely, and want you ! ’ ”

The Wordsworths spent some time with Coleridge at
 Göttingen. If the statement made by Dorothy, in a letter
 to Thomas Poole, from Sockburn,* that they left Coleridge
 “ ten weeks ago,” is strictly accurate, they must have
 remained at Göttingen for about three weeks. They then
 returned to Hamburgh by diligence, crossed over thence to
 Yarmouth by boat, and from Yarmouth went straight north
 to Sockburn-on-Tees, in the county of Durham.

* Dated July 4, 1799.

It is not unworthy of note that the Wedgwoods, who had enabled Coleridge to visit Germany during this winter, had also advanced certain sums to the Wordsworths in the same liberal spirit. Miss Meteyard has published, in her *Group of Englishmen*,* the accounts transmitted to England by the Messrs von Axen of Hamburgh, showing what sums the Wedgwoods advanced. And it may be interesting (now that they have been made public) to transcribe a few of the items here: "October 2, Wordsworth received by letter from the firm, £32, 7s. 3d.; on the 12th of the same month Coleridge was paid £35; on December 24, £30; on January 24, 1799, £30; March 29, £30; and on July 8th, the poets conjointly received the sum of £106, 10s. This last sum must refer to a current account between March and July, as Wordsworth returned to England in the spring of 1799."

The Goslar poems include those addressed to Lucy. Some have supposed that there was an actual Lucy, known to Wordsworth in Yorkshire, "about the springs of Dove," to whom he was attached, who died early, and whose love and beauty he commemorates in these five memorial poems. There is no doubt that the intensity of the lines, the allusion to the spinning wheel, to the "violet by the mossy stone half hidden from the eye," to "the bowers where Lucy played," to the "heath, the calm, and quiet scene," all suggest a real person. We only wish there were evidence that it had been so. But there is no such evidence.

A German novelist, the Baroness von Stockhausen (Alice Saltzbrun), in her *Novellen und Skizzenblätter*,† has written a slight tale, which she calls *Vielchenduft*, in which she tries to found upon these Lucy poems a story of Wordsworth's early attachment. She shows no knowledge of Wordsworth

* See p. 99.

† Published by Kührtmann at Bremen.

beyond these Lucy poems, and the tale is a "conceit;" but as Miss Harriet Martineau—in her notice of Mrs Wordsworth, in *The Daily News*, thought the gossip about an early "phantom of delight," that floated across the Poet's path, of sufficient importance to mention it—it may be worth while not only to contradict it now, but also to give a summary of the German story in a footnote.*

As Miss Martineau went so far as to suggest that the lines—

"She was a phantom of delight,
When first she gleamed upon my sight,"

referred not to Mary Hutchinson at all, but to this mythical "Lucy," it may be well to add that in a note by Henry

* Wordsworth is supposed to be living in the house of Lucy's grandmother, on the Dove, not far from Pickering, with Lucy waiting on him. Lucy and her sister go to Pickering in a boat to sell their herbs, and there the Bishop of Carlisle is staying. The water is that of a lake, and Wordsworth goes out in the boat with Lucy. The time is after the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and Wordsworth has been travelling on the Continent, and has brought home a picture of a foreign lady. He is very hard up. Legacies come to him *after* this episode, as well as the Directorship of Stamps, to which he was appointed (at Lucy's instigation) by the Bishop of Carlisle!! Lucy is nineteen. She has a friend, Mary Green, also in the herb business.

Lucy is deeply interested in the poet, who reads his verses to her. She goes out early to get *violets* for his table. The title *Vielchenduft* (violet-fragrance), is symbolical of what Lucy is to Wordsworth—a sweet presence, little regarded. She goes to the Bishop with his poems, and interests him in the poet: also purchases for him with her scanty earnings a "Poet's Dictionary!" which he had been too poor to buy. She hears a forester singing his lines—

"A slumber did my spirit seal,"

and sings over the air to him.

The poet soothes himself with her society, and accepts her services, even letting her row the boat, the rascal, without seeing that she is dying of consumption. No trace here of his "cherishing" her, or crying out, "If Lucy should be dead!"

The Pentecost Festival and the flower-season are approaching. Discussion takes place between Wordsworth and Lucy as to her decorating herself with violets or roses, with remarks on the significance of violets as symbols of domestic happiness.

Crabbe Robinson, to a letter written by Mrs Clarkson to him in 1842, Robinson adds, "The poet expressly told me that the verses were on his wife."

Wordsworth and Coleridge are at church in Pickering, and hear the flower-sermon, which is given in the tale. Lucy is there, adorned with roses, purchased from a gardener, as not hoping for *domestic* happiness. Wordsworth is astonished at her beauty, on Coleridge pointing it out. She faints at the close of the service, and dies three weeks after, when Wordsworth finds how much he misses her.

The tale has much less merit, and less justification, than Auerbach's novel on Spinoza, in which Van den Ende's daughter is introduced.

CHAPTER XII.

SOCKBURN.

WORDSWORTH and his sister spent about nine months* of the summer and autumn of 1799 at Sockburn, with the Hutchinsons. It will be seen from Dorothy's letter to Mr Poole (July 4) that they were in doubt where they should settle. Coleridge had not written to them during the ten weeks that had elapsed since they left him at Göttingen, and they wished to settle near him, if possible; but Wordsworth also wished his home to be not far from a good library. This made them think of the Quantock country, from its proximity to Bristol, rather than of Cumberland or Westmoreland; as, in these days, neither at Kendal nor Keswick was there any public library.

Since Mrs Wordsworth came from Sockburn, and the Poet and his sister spent so much of the year 1799 in that solitary farm-house, some description of the place may be given.

Sockburn-on-Tees is seven miles south south-east of Darlington. It is thus described in the *Delineations of England, historical, topographical, and descriptive* †:—"Sockborne, a small parish, comprehending only the manor of the same, is accurately described by Leland as of 'a mile cum pace, of exceeding pleasant ground, almost made an isle as Tese ryver windeth about it.'" In Hutchinson's *Durham*,‡ it is said, "A farm-house stands on or near the place where Sockburn-house formerly was, and the Grey Stone mentioned as the monument of Comin's victory over his dreadful enemy

* Compare the Fenwick note to the lines on *A Favourite Dog*, vol. iii., p. 39.

† Vol. v., p. 42.

‡ Vol. iii., p. 149.

is shown to the traveller in a field adjoining the Church." This Grey Stone is referred to by Lewis in his *Topographical Dictionary of England*.*

In a letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Miss Pollard, dated only, "Sockburn, April," but evidently written some time before this visit, and possibly when her brother was living in France, she says she is on a visit to the Hutchinsons, six miles from Darlington. "They are settled at Sockburn, six miles from Darlington, perfectly to their satisfaction. They are perfectly independent, and have not a wish ungratified. . . . The house was built by their uncle, who left them the furniture and £1800. It is an excellent house, not at all like a farm-house. . . . It is a grazing estate, and most delightfully pleasant, washed nearly round by the Tees (a noble river), stocked with sheep and lambs." . . . [She speaks in this letter of having been at Newcastle].

There is also some account of Sockburn in Mackenzie and Ross's *History of the County Palatine of Durham*. The whole township consists of one large farm.

In the parish church there is an altar tomb with the inscription, "Here lies the body of Sarah Hutchinson, daughter of Thomas Hutchinson of Whitton, who died July 18th, 1786, in the 76th year of her age."

The History states that a headstone commemorates some of the family of Hutchinson of Penrith and Stockton.

The old house of the Conyers, which was the ancient hall of Sockburn, has entirely vanished. The little church, standing lonely on its level green, has survived the halls of its ancient patrons. Deep traces of foundations of gardens and orchards a little to the south point out the site of the mansion, and one old decaying Spanish chestnut

* Vol. iv., p. 102.

seems alone to connect the deserted spot with some recollection of its ancient owners. The only approach to the church and manor is by a narrow carriage-road from the north, and the solitude of the place seems enhanced by the uninviting notice on a sign-post, "No road but to Sockburn."

In answer to inquiries as to the relation of the family of the Hutchinsons to Sockburn, a nephew of Mrs Wordsworth's, the Rev. Thomas Hutchinson of Kimbolton, Leominster, writes,

"The family of Hutchinson is descended from a follower of Harold Harfager, and was settled on the banks of the Tees before the Conquest. My father was a son of John and Mary Hutchinson, who left the neighbourhood of Stockton-on-Tees, and settled in business in Penrith, his wife being a Penrith lady. The mother died in 1783, and the father two years afterwards. On this sad event, my father was adopted, at twelve years of age, by his great uncle and aunt, both unmarried, who occupied the farm at Sockburn. This lady died in 1786, aged seventy-six, and her brother three years later, when my father was only sixteen years old, too young to undertake the management of the farm. But as the stock, &c., on the farm was left to him by his great uncle, his grandfather, Henry Hutchinson of Whitton, came to Sockburn, and remained there till the landlord would accept the young man as a tenant. My father remained at Sockburn till 1800, when he left, in consequence of a disagreement with the landlord, and removed to Gallow Hill, in the parish of Brompton, near Scarborough, an estate belonging to Sir George Cayley. The Sockburn estate belonged at that time, and still belongs, to the family of Blacketts, of Northumberland. I cannot give you any particulars of Gallow Hill—my father did not often refer to it. I believe his heart clung to Sockburn to the last day of his life."

The following letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to

Thomas Poole, Nether Stowey, casts some light on the movements and plans of the family :—

“SOCKBURN, 4th July [1799].

“MY DEAR MR POOLE,—Ever since our arrival in England it has been William’s intention to write to you, yet his delaying disposition has so got the better of him, that though we have been two months on English ground, you have heard nothing of us from ourselves. Knowing how much you are interested in our welfare, I can no longer refrain from taking up the pen to inform you *where* we are, and that we are in good health. We found living in Germany, with the enjoyment of any tolerable advantages, much more expensive than we expected, which determined us to come home with the first tolerable weather of the spring. We left Coleridge and Mr Chester at Göttingen ten weeks ago,* as you probably have heard, and proceeded with as little delay as possible, travelling in a German diligence to Ham-
burgh, whence we went down the Elbe in a boat to Cux-
haven, where we were not detained longer than we wished for our necessary refreshment, and we had an excellent passage to England of two days and nights. We proceeded immediately from Yarmouth into the north, where we are now staying with some of our early friends at a pleasant farm on the banks of the Tees. We are very anxious to hear from Coleridge,—he promised to write us from Göttingen, and though we have written twice, we have heard nothing of him. We hope that, having delayed writing to us longer than he intended, he now delays because he is on the point of returning to England. When we were at Göttingen he received a letter from Mrs Coleridge, by which we had the pleasure of hearing that she and

* *I.e.*, on 26th February.

dear little Hartley were well. Poor Berkely.* I was much grieved to hear of his death. It gave us sincere joy to learn from Coleridge that your good mother was in better health three months ago than she had ever been for some time. I hope that we shall again have the same good accounts of her. We are yet quite undetermined where we shall reside; we have no house in view at present. It is William's wish to be near a good library, and, if possible, in a pleasant country. If you hear of any place in your neighbourhood that will be likely to suit us, we shall be much obliged to you if you will take the trouble of writing to us. We were very glad to hear that Mr Wedgwood is going to settle not far from Stowey.

"William joins with me in kind remembrances to your mother, and Mrs Coleridge, and yourself.

"I will not make any apology for this short and unentertaining letter. I know you will not receive it without pleasure.—Believe me, my dear sir, yours affectionately,

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH."

"Pray remember us to Mr Ward, and request Coleridge to write when he arrives at Stowey.

"Our address—At Mr Hutchinson's, Sockburn, near Northallerton, Yorkshire."

There is scarcely any record of how the nine months, from March to December 1799, were spent at Sockburn. But, in addition to the difficult question of determining his future home, he had business correspondence with Cottle during that summer.

In his *Early Recollections*,† Cottle tells us that both he

* The infant child of the Coleridges; born at Nether Stowey, May 1798; died, while Coleridge was in Germany, Feb. 1799.

† Vol. ii., p. 23, &c.

and Coleridge paid a visit to Wordsworth in the autumn of 1799. Coleridge left Göttingen on the 24th June, was at Brunswick on the 30th, and soon afterwards returned to England. He seems to have gone first to his old home at Stowey, and then to see his relations at Ottery, in Devonshire. In November he was in London, busy at the office of *The Morning Post*. Between his return from Ottery and his going up to the Metropolis, however, he went north with Cottle to Greta Bridge, to meet Wordsworth, and accompanied him into Westmoreland and Cumberland, each seeking a place where he might settle down not far apart from the other. In the published accounts of the movements of the respective households at this particular time there are conflicting statements; but it is not difficult to trace the main thread of the story. The Bishop of Lincoln tells us that "in the summer of 1799," * Coleridge wrote to Wordsworth: "I am anxiously eager to have you steadily employed on *The Recluse*. . . . My dear friend, I do entreat you go on with *The Recluse*; and I wish you would write a poem, in blank verse, addressed to those who, in consequence of the complete failure of the French Revolution, have thrown up all hopes of the amelioration of mankind, and are sinking into an almost epicurean selfishness, disguising the same under the soft titles of domestic attachment and contempt for visionary *philosophes*. It would do great good, and might form a part of *The Recluse*, for in my present mood I am wholly against the publication of any small poems." It would be important to know the date of this letter. It is certain that it was not written from Göttingen. Dorothy Wordsworth's letter to Mr Poole makes it clear that, since their arrival in England, they had not heard from Coleridge up to the 4th of July. The next

* *Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 139.

letter which he wrote on the same subject—the continuation of *The Recluse*—is dated October 12, 1799. But before that date Coleridge had been with Wordsworth in the North of England.

Cottle's account* of the sale of the *Lyrical Ballads*, of his action regarding them, and subsequent correspondence, is our best clue to the sequence of events at this stage.

"As a curious literary fact, I might mention that the sale of the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* was so slow, and the severity of most of the reviews so great, that its progress to oblivion seemed ordained to be as rapid as it was certain. I had given thirty guineas for the copyright, as detailed in the preceding letters; but the heavy sale induced me to part with the largest proportion of the impression of 500 at a loss, to Mr Arch, a London bookseller. After this transaction had occurred, I received a letter from Mr Wordsworth, written the day before he set sail for the Continent, requesting me to make over my interest in the *Lyrical Ballads* to Mr Johnson, of St Paul's Churchyard. This I could not have done, had I been so disposed, as the engagement had been made with Mr Arch."

Cottle adds: "On Mr W.'s return to England, I addressed a letter to him, explaining the reasons why I could not comply with his request, to which he thus replied:

"MY DEAR COTTLE,—I perceive that it would have been impossible for you to comply with my request respecting the *Lyrical Ballads*, as you had entered into a treaty with Arch. How is the copyright to be disposed of when you quit the bookselling business? We were much amused with the *Anthology*. Your poem of the *Killerop* we liked better than any; only we regretted that you did not save the poor little

* *Early Recollections*, Vol. ii., p. 23, &c.

innocent's life, by some benevolent act or other. You might have managed a little pathetic incident, in which nature, appearing forcibly in the child, might have worked in some way or other upon its superstitious destroyer.

"We have spent our time pleasantly enough in Germany, but we are right glad to find ourselves in England, for we have learnt to know its value. We left Coleridge well at Göttingen a month ago. . . .—God bless you, my dear Cottle.—Your affectionate friend,

W. WORDSWORTH."

Cottle continues: "Soon after the receipt of the above, I received another letter from Mr W., kindly urging me to pay him a visit in the north, in which, as an inducement, he says, 'If you come down I will accompany you on your tour.' . . . 'Write to me beforehand and I will accompany you on a tour. You will come by Greta Bridge, which is about twenty miles from this place (Sockburn); thither Dorothy and I will go to meet you. Dorothy will return to Sockburn, and after we have seen all the curiosities of that neighbourhood I will accompany you into Cumberland and Westmoreland. . . .—God bless you, dear Cottle.

W. W."

(Bishop Wordsworth mentions Sept. 2 as the date of this letter.) Cottle continues: "A short time after the receipt of this invitation, Mr Coleridge arrived in Bristol from Germany, and as he was about to pay Mr Wordsworth a visit, he pressed me to accompany him. . . . In this interview with Mr Wordsworth the subject of the *Lyrical Ballads* was mentioned but once, and that casually, and only to account for its failure! which Mr W. ascribed to two causes: first, the *Ancient Mariner*, which, he said, no one seemed to understand; and, secondly, the unfavourable notice of most of the reviews.

"On my reaching London, having an account to settle

with Messrs Longman & Rees, the booksellers, of Paternoster Row, I sold them all my copyrights, which were valued as one lot, by a third party. On my next seeing Mr Longman he told me that, in estimating the value of the copyrights, Fox's *Achmed* and Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* were 'reckoned as nothing.' 'That being the case,' I replied, 'as both these authors are my personal friends, I should be obliged if you would return me again these two copyrights, that I may have the pleasure of presenting them to the respective writers.' Mr Longman answered, with his accustomed liberality, 'You are welcome to them.' On my reaching Bristol I gave Mr Fox his receipt for twenty guineas; and on Mr Coleridge's return from the north I gave him Mr Wordsworth's receipt for his thirty guineas; so that whatever advantage has arisen subsequently from the sale of this volume of the *Lyrical Ballads* has pertained exclusively to Mr W."

In the *Memoirs* of Wordsworth, by his nephew, it is stated* that, while Cottle could not go beyond Greta Bridge, Coleridge accompanied Wordsworth, and his brother John, in this tour into the region of the lakes; and that Coleridge sent the following account of the journey to Dorothy Wordsworth at Sockburn:—

"William has received your two letters. At Temple Sowerby we met your brother John, who accompanied us to Hawes-Water, Ambleside, and the divine sisters, Rydal and Grasmere. Here we stayed two days. We accompanied John over the fork of Helvellyn, on a day when light and darkness coexisted in contiguous masses, and the earth and sky were but one. Nature lived for us in all her grandest accidents. We quitted him by a wild tarn just as we caught a view of the gloomy Ullswater.

* Vol. ii., p. 147.

"Your brother John is one of you; a man who hath solitary usings* of his own intellect, deep in feeling, with a subtle tact, a swift instinct of truth and beauty: he interests me much.

"You can feel, what I cannot express for myself, how deeply I have been impressed by a world of scenery absolutely new to me. At Rydal and Grasmere I received, I think, the deepest delight; yet Hawes-Water, through many a varying view, kept my eyes dim with tears; and, the evening approaching, Derwent-Water, in diversity of harmonious features, in the majesty of its beauties, and in the beauty of its majesty . . . and the black crags close under the snowy mountains, whose snows were pinkish with the setting sun, and the reflections from the rich clouds that floated over some and rested upon others!—it was to me a vision of a fair country: why were you not with us?"

Of the same journey Wordsworth wrote:—

"We left Cottle, as you know, at Greta Bridge. We were obliged to take the mail over Stanemoor; the road interesting with sun and mist. At Temple Sowerby I learned that John was at Newbiggin. I sent a note; he came, looks very well, said he would accompany us a few days. Next day we set off and dined at Mr Myers', thence to Bampton, where we slept. On Friday proceeded along the lake of Hawes-Water, a noble scene which pleased us much. The mists hung so low that we could not go directly over to Ambleside, so we went round by Long Sleddale to Kentmere, Troutbeck, Rayrigg, and Bowness; . . . a rainy and raw day. . . . Went to the ferry, much disgusted with the new erections about Windermere; . . . thence to Hawkshead: great change among the people since we were last there. Next day by Rydal to Grasmere, Robert New-

* Query, "musings."

ton's. At Robert Newton's we have remained till to-day. John left us on Tuesday: we walked with him to the tarn. This day was a fine one, and we had some grand mountain scenery; the rest of the week has been bad weather. The evening before last we walked to the upper waterfall at Rydal, and saw it through the gloom, and it was very magnificent. Coleridge was much struck with Grasmere and its neighbourhood. I have much to say to you. You will think my plan a mad one, but I have thought of building a house there by the lake-side. John would give me £40 to buy the ground. There is a small house * at Grasmere empty, which, perhaps, we may take; but of this we will speak."

In the first book of *The Prelude*, after the forty-five lines written on leaving Goslar, we have an account of an autumn day which Wordsworth spent at Sockburn, or near it, pondering the vexed question of his future home. He tells us he came "to a green, shady place," and sat down beneath a tree, where—in the stillness of the sheltering grove—he revolved the question for many hours; and the hours passed, as he debated with himself many plans of many places, "encouraging and dismissing" them; and hearing nothing but the occasional fall of an acorn from its cup, pattering through the sere leaves to the ground, till at last, at sundown, he made choice of the Vale of Grasmere, and the cottage at the Town End, which soon afterwards became his home. He rose from his long reverie as the sun was setting, and started on foot, "with the chance equipment of that hour," on a three days' journey,

"Keen as a Truant, or a Fugitive,
But as a Pilgrim resolute,"

"Cottage."

itae, refers to Dove Cottage. See *Autobiographical*

Either this passage records another visit to Grasmere in the early autumn, or—what is much more likely—the realism of the narrative here gives way, and Wordsworth supplies us with an imaginative account of the journey with his sister in the late December to Dove Cottage.

From the letter written to his sister, during the autumn excursion with Coleridge and his brother John, it seems that he first thought of building a house at Grasmere by the lake, and that his brother had offered him money to buy the ground. This excursion took place in the month of September. It could hardly have been *afterwards* that the day (described in *The Prelude*) was spent in meditative reverie under the tree near Sockburn; and if beforehand, the description must, I think, refer, by anticipation, to the journey finally taken to Grasmere in December.*

On his return to the south, we find Coleridge writing thus to Wordsworth:—†

Oct. 12, 1799.—“I long to see what you have been doing. O let it be the tail-piece of *The Recluse*, for of nothing but *The Recluse* can I hear patiently. That it is to be addressed to me makes me more desirous that it should not be a poem of itself. To be addressed, as a beloved man, by a thinker, at the close of such a poem as *The Recluse*, a poem *non unius populi*, is the only event, I believe, capable of inciting in me an hour's vanity—vanity, nay, it is too good a feeling to be so called; it would indeed be a self-elevation produced *ab extra*.”

In Dec. 1799 he again writes from London, “As to myself, I dedicate my nights and days to Stuart. . . . By all means let me have the tragedy and *Peter Bell* as soon as

* It is, however, quite possible that Wordsworth took a journey alone in August to Grasmere.

† *Memoirs*, vol. i. pp. 159-60.

possible ;" and in Feb. 1800, "I grieve that *The Recluse* sleeps." *

These extracts from letters, which the Bishop of Lincoln gives us in fragments, show the deep interest which Coleridge took in the completion of Wordsworth's biographical poem ; and they are amongst the few documents that cast light on the line of Wordsworth's work during that summer and autumn at Sockburn. He must have been attempting, at intervals, to bring passages of this poem into shape ; but his work was doubtless very desultory, and uncertainty as to his future would prevent him from undertaking anything that implied steady application.

At last—the decision being come to, and Grasmere selected as his home—his aims became clearer, and he felt himself braced up to more continuous work and determined labour. The account he gives of his journey from Sockburn to Grasmere, in a letter to Coleridge,† and especially his account of Hardrane waterfall, is one of the best specimens of his prose writing that we possess. It was written a few days after the end of that "pleasant, loitering journey,"‡ as Wordsworth called it, when the brother and sister reached their "hermitage" at Dove Cottage on the 21st Dec. (St Thomas's day) 1799. This journey supplied him with the materials of some of his later lyrics, notably *Hart Leap Well*.

"We arrived here on the evening of St Thomas's day, last Friday, and have now been four days in our new abode without writing to you—a long time ! but we have been in such confusion as not to have had a moment's leisure. My dear friend, we talk of you perpetually, and for me I see you everywhere.

* *Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 160.

† *Memoirs*, vol. i., pp. 149-54.

‡ *The Prelude*, book i.

"But let me be a little more methodical. We left Sockburn last Tuesday morning. We crossed the Tees by moonlight in the Sockburn fields, and after ten good miles' riding came in sight of the Swale. It is there a beautiful river, with its green bank and flat holms scattered over with trees. Four miles further brought us to Richmond, with its huge ivied castle, its friarage steeple, its castle tower resembling a huge steeple, and two other steeple towers, for such they appeared to us. The situation of this place resembles that of Barnard Castle, but I should suppose is somewhat inferior to it. George accompanied us eight miles further, and there we parted with sorrowful hearts. We were now in Wensley Dale, and Dorothy and I set off side by side to foot it as far as Kendal. I will not clog my letter with a description of this celebrated dale; but I must not neglect to mention that a little before sunset we reached one of the waterfalls, of which I read you a short description in Mr Taylor's tour. It is a singular scene; I meant to have given you some account of it, but I feel myself too lazy to execute the task. 'Tis such a performance as you might have expected from some giant gardener employed by one of Queen Elizabeth's courtiers, if this same giant gardener had consulted with Spenser, and they two had finished the work together. By this you will understand that it is at once formal and wild. We reached Askrigg, twelve miles, before six in the evening, having been obliged to walk the last two miles over hard frozen roads, to the great annoyance of our ankles and feet. Next morning the earth was thinly covered with snow, enough to make the road soft and prevent its being slippery.

"On leaving Askrigg we turned aside to see another waterfall. It was a beautiful morning, with driving snow showers, which disappeared by fits, and unveiled the east, which was all one delicious pale orange colour. After walking through

two small fields, we came to a mill, which we passed; and in a moment a sweet little valley opened before us, with an area of grassy ground, and a stream dashing over various laminae of black rocks, close under a bank covered with firs; the bank and stream on our left, another woody bank on our right, and the flat meadow in front, from which, as at Buttermere, the stream had retired as it were to hide itself under the shade. As we walked up this delightful valley we were tempted to look back perpetually on the stream, which reflected the orange lights of the morning among the gloomy rocks, with a brightness varying with the agitation of the current. The steeple of Askrigg was between us and the east, at the bottom of the valley; it was not a quarter of a mile distant, but oh! how far we were from it! The two banks seemed to join before us with a facing of rock common to them both. When we reached this bottom the valley opened out again; two rocky banks on each side, which, hung with ivy and moss, and fringed luxuriantly with brushwood, ran directly parallel to each other, and then approaching with a gentle curve at their point of union, presented a lofty waterfall, the termination of the valley. It was a keen frosty morning, showers of snow threatening us, but the sun bright and active. We had a task of twenty-one miles to perform in a short winter's day. All this put our minds into such a state of excitation that we were no unworthy spectators of this delightful scene. On a nearer approach the waters seemed to fall down a tall arch or niche that had shaped itself by insensible moulderings in the wall of an old castle. We left this spot with reluctance, but highly exhilarated.

"When we had walked about a mile and a half we overtook two men with a string of ponies and some empty carts. I recommended to Dorothy to avail herself of this opportunity of husbanding her strength: we rode

with them more than two miles. 'Twas bitter cold, the wind driving the snow behind us in the best style of a mountain storm. We soon reached an inn at a place called Hardrane, and descending from our vehicles, after warming ourselves by the cottage fire, we walked up the brook-side to take a view of a third waterfall. We had not walked above a few hundred yards between two winding rocky banks before we came full upon the waterfall, which seemed to throw itself in a narrow line from a lofty wall of rock, the water, which shot manifestly to some distance from the rock, seeming to be dispersed into a thin shower scarcely visible before it reached the basin. We were disappointed in the cascade itself, though the introductory and accompanying banks were an exquisite mixture of grandeur and beauty. We walked up to the fall; and what would I not give if I could convey to you the feelings and images which were then communicated to me? After cautiously sounding our way over stones of all colours and sizes, encased in the clearest water formed by the spray of the fall, we found the rock, which before had appeared like a wall, extending itself over our heads, like the ceiling of a huge cave, from the summit of which the waters shot directly over our heads into a basin, and among fragments wrinkled over with masses of ice as white as snow, or rather, as Dorothy says, like congealed froth. The water fell at least ten yards from us, and we stood directly behind it, the excavation not so deep in the rock as to impress any feeling of darkness, but lofty and magnificent; but in connection with the adjoining banks excluding as much of the sky as could well be spared from a scene so exquisitely beautiful.

"The spot where we stood was as dry as the chamber in which I am now sitting, and the incumbent rock, of which the groundwork was limestone, veined and dappled with colours

which melted into each other with every possible variety of colour. On the summit of the cave were three festoons, or rather wrinkles, in the rock, run up parallel like the folds of a curtain when it is drawn up. Each of these was hung with icicles of various length, and nearly in the middle of the festoon in the deepest valley of the waves that ran parallel to each other, the stream shot from the rows of icicles in irregular fits of strength, and with a body of water that varied every moment. Sometimes the stream shot into the basin in one continued current; sometimes it was interrupted almost in the midst of its fall, and was blown towards part of the waterfall at no great distance from our feet like the heaviest thunder-shower. In such a situation you have at every moment a feeling of the presence of the sky. Large fleecy clouds drove over our heads above the rush of the water, and the sky appeared of a blue more than usually brilliant. The rocks on each side, which, joining with the side of this cave, formed the vista of the brook, were chequered with three diminutive waterfalls or rather courses of water. Each of these was a miniature of all that summer and winter can produce of delicate beauty. The rock in the centre of the falls, where the water was most abundant, a deep black, the adjoining parts yellow, white, purple, and dove-colour, covered with water-plants of the most vivid green, and hung with streaming icicles, that in some places seem to conceal the verdure of the plants, and the violet and yellow variegation of the rocks; and in some places render the colours more brilliant.

"I cannot express to you the enchanting effect produced by this Arabian scene of colour as the wind blew aside the great waterfall behind which we stood and alternately hid and revealed each of these fairy cataracts in irregular succession, or displayed them with various gradations of distinctness as the intervening spray was thickened

or dispersed. What a scene too in summer! In the luxury of our imagination we could not help feeding upon the pleasure which this cave, in the heat of a July noon, would spread through a frame exquisitely sensible. That huge rock on the right, the bank winding round on the left with all its living foliage, and the breeze stealing up the valley, and bedewing the cavern with the freshest imaginable spray. And then the murmur of the water, the quiet, the seclusion, and a long summer day."

CHAPTER XIII.

GRASMERE.

DOVE COTTAGE, Grasmere, has been described in the *Memoirs* of the Poet by the Bishop of Lincoln (vol. i. p. 156); by De Quincey, in his *Recollections of the Lakes* (p. 130, &c.); in the notes to this edition of the *Poems* (vol. ii. p. 102, &c.); and also in the *English Lake District, as interpreted in the Poems of Wordsworth* (p. 41, &c.); and in *Through the Wordsworth Country* (p. 55, &c.). The district around is memorialized in many of the poems; and, in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal*, its features are still more remarkably recorded, with a simplicity and minuteness, a subtle insight and a loving fidelity, that make that journal unique amongst her many descriptions of places. Small portions of it have been already published, as illustrations of some of the poems, in their chronological place; but larger extracts in continuous series will be the best disclosure of the simple yet noble ways—the “plain living and high thinking” of the Wordsworth household in these Grasmere days.

The hitherto unpublished canto of *The Recluse*, entitled *Home at Grasmere*, given in full (pp. 232-254), will also cast some light on the daily work, and the manner of life, in that cottage at Townend. Here it was that to Wordsworth there was

“Life

In common things, the endless store of things,
Rare,—or at least so seeming,—every day
Found all about me in our neighbourhood,

and, from morn
To night, unbroken cheerfulness serene." *

For a description of the externals of the house, and of its interior, as well as of the orchard, often alluded to in the sister's journal,

"This plot of orchard ground is ours,
My trees are there, my sister's flowers,"

the reader must be referred back to vol. ii. pp. 102-3. The cottage still remains as it was in the beginning of the century, although its surroundings are entirely changed. In Wordsworth's time there was no other (competing) cottage near it; and down to the side of the lake no house or outhouse interrupted the view of the water and the opposite slopes of Loughrigg and Silver Howe. The "orchard" is slightly changed. The "moss hut" is gone, and a stone seat takes its place; but there are apple trees around its site, the successors of those which shed their blooms on the poet as he watched the "brother of the dancing leaves"—the green linnet—"lead the revels of the May" amongst the hazels close at hand.

The little rocky well, where Wordsworth and his sister planted their daffodils and Christmas roses, may still be seen. Daffodils still grow about the well, but the roses were transplanted to another corner of the "garden ground." All around this cottage, at every turn of the road, there are places as thoroughly immortalized in verse, as poetry can confer it on locality. There is the fir grove—"Brothers Grove" or "John's Grove"—close at hand; the "Wishing Gate" beyond it; the two "Heath-clad Rocks" named after Mary and Sarah Hutchinson; "the Glow-worm Rock," and the "Quarry" below it; the "Leech Gatherer's" pool, on White-Moss Common, with

* *The Prelude*, book i.

"Stone Arthur" above it; the site of "Michael's sheepfold" in Greenhead Ghyll; the "Parsonage" where old Sympson, the pastor of *The Excursion*, lived; "the churchyard amongst the mountains" at Grasmere, where the Poet, his wife, his sister, their children who died in infancy, their daughter, and son, all lie under the shade of the yew trees planted by his own hand; the Church itself, with its "naked rafters intricately crossed," its "oaken benches," its "marble monuments," its "heraldic shields" and "faded hatchments," its "sepulchral stones, with footworn epitaphs," its "admonitory texts, each in its ornamental scroll enclosed"; "Emma's Dell" on Easdale beck, and "Joanna's rock" (whose echoing laugh rang over Cumberland) hard by; Lancrigg, with its terrace walks, where much of *The Prelude* was murmured out, and dictated to the Poet's willing scribes; Allan Bank, where *The Excursion* was mainly composed; Wyke cottage, where "the Westmoreland girl" rescued her lamb from drowning; Loughrigg, with its terraces and its tarn,— "Diana's looking-glass," associated with Beaumont's purchase,—and the mere below, with its "one green island and its winding shores." But it is needless to particularize, where there are fifty spots, in this delightful centre, associated with the genius of its poet, which can easily be traced, and which, with all the alterations of recent years—few of them improvements—are still recognisable, as they were described at the beginning of the century.

There were sundry drawbacks, however, associated with Dove cottage, especially when the family had—as they constantly had—visitors with them, which are frankly stated in the following letters from Dorothy Wordsworth to Mrs Marshall. These letters throw light on the occupations and movements of the household, and on the visits of John Wordsworth, Mary Hutchinson, and the Coleridges during 1800. John Wordsworth seems to have come to Dove Cottage in January,

and to have stayed eight months with his brother and sister, leaving them on Sept. 29th (never to return). Mary Hutchinson had spent five weeks before September; and she returned to Grasmere on the 7th October, and stayed till the very close of the year. Coleridge was two months, and Mrs Coleridge and their boy one month, in the cottage. If this is a sample of their hospitality, it is obvious that it must have been difficult to make the little cottage accommodate so many visitors.

On the 10th Sept. Dorothy wrote thus to Mrs Marshall :—After describing the Vale as “one small, green, retired woody valley,” she says, “We are daily more delighted with Grasmere and its neighbourhood. Our walks are perpetually varied, and we are more fond of the mountains as our acquaintance with them increases. We have a boat upon the lake, and a small orchard, and a small garden; which, as it is the work of our own hands, we regard with pride and partiality. This garden we enclosed from the road, and pulled down a fence which formerly divided it from the orchard. The orchard is very small; but then it is a delightful one, from its retirement, and the excessive beauty of the prospect from it. Our cottage is quite large enough for us, though very small; and we have made it neat and comfortable within doors, and it looks very nice on the outside, for though the roses and honeysuckles, which we have planted against it, are only of this year’s growth, yet it is covered all over with green leaves and scarlet flowers; for we have trained scarlet beans upon threads, which are not only exceedingly beautiful, but very useful, as their produce is immense. The only objection we have to our house is that it is rather too near the road; and from its smallness, and the manner in which it is built, noises pass from one part of the house to the other; so that if we had any visitors, a sick person could not be in quiet-

ness. . . . My brother John has been with us eight months, during which time we have had a good deal of company. . . . William is going to publish a second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, with a second volume. He intends to give them the title of 'Poems by W. Wordsworth,' as Mrs Robinson has claimed the title, and is about publishing a volume of *Lyrical Tales*.* This is a great objection to the former title, particularly as they are both printed at the same press, and Longman is the publisher of both works. The first volume sold much better than we expected, and was liked by a much greater number of people; not that we had ever much doubt of its finally making its way; but we knew that poems, so different from what have in general become popular immediately after their publication, were not likely to be admired all at once. The first volume, I have no doubt, has prepared a number of purchasers for the second; and, independently of that, I think the second is much more likely to please the generality of readers. William's health is by no means strong. He has written a great deal since we first went to Alfoxden, namely, during the years preceding our going into Germany, while we were there, and since our arrival in England; and he writes with so much feeling and agitation that it brings on a sense of pain. . . .

"We have spent a week at Mr Coleridge's since his arrival at Keswick. His house is most delightfully situated, and combines all possible advantages both for his wife and himself. *She* likes to be near a town, *he* in the country. It is only half or quarter of a mile from Keswick, and commands a view of the whole vale. . . . William and John were in Yorkshire last summer,† at Goredale, Yordas,

* A volume, *Lyrical Tales*, was published at London in 1800, written by Mrs Mary Robinson.

† They left Grasmere on May 14, and returned on June 7, 1800.

&c. Thence they went to see our friends the Hutchinsons. During their absence I felt myself very lonely. . . . We are very comfortably situated with respect to neighbours of the lower classes. They are excellent people, friendly in performing all offices of friendship and humanity, and attentive to us without servility. If we were sick they would wait upon us night and day. We are also upon very intimate terms with one family in the middle rank of life, a clergyman* with a very small income, his wife, son, and daughter. The old man is upwards of eighty, yet he goes a-fishing to the tarns on the hill-tops with my brothers, and he is as active as any man of fifty. His wife is a delightful old woman, mild and gentle, yet cheerful in her manners, and much of the gentlewoman, so made by long exercise of the duties of a wife and a mother, and the charities of a neighbour; for she has lived forty years in the Vale and seldom left her home." . . .

Of their employments at Grasmere she says:—

"Though not very various, they are irregular. We walk at all times of the day; we row upon the water; and, in the summer, sit a great part of our time under the apple trees of the orchard, or in a wood close by the lake side. William writes verses. John goes fishing. We read the books we have, and such as we can procure. I read German, partly as preparatory to translating; but I am unfit for the task alone, and William is better employed, so I do not know when it will turn to much account. If William's name rises amongst the booksellers we shall have no occasion for it. We often have our friends calling in upon us." [Mr Clarkson is specially mentioned.] "Mr Clarkson is the man who took so much pains about the slave trade. He has a farm at Ullswater, and has built a house. Mrs C. is a pleasant woman."

* Sympson, the Pastor of *The Excursion*.

It was at the close of the first year of the Wordsworths' residence at Dove Cottage that the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared in two volumes, with an elaborate "Preface," explaining the principles on which the poems had been written. Reference to the preparation of this "preface" will be found in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal. A critical estimate of it is here out of place; but it should be noted that it represents the poetical theory of Wordsworth only, not that of Coleridge; while Southey wrote to Coleridge of Wordsworth (Aug. 4, 1802): "Does he not associate more feeling with particular phrases,—and you also with him,—than these phrases can convey to anyone else?"—a judgment which reveals the limitation of the critic, rather than of the poets he criticised.

The second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* contained, amongst other poems, *Hart Leap Well*, *The Brothers*, *Lucy Gray*, *Ruth*, the *Mathew Poems*, *Three Years She Grew*, *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, *The Poet's Epitaph*, the *Poem on the Naming of Places*, and *Michael*. Explanatory notes, stating the circumstances under which each was composed, will be found in the second volume of this edition.

In the beginning of January 1801 Coleridge wrote to his friend Thomas Poole, asking him to procure the new edition because of its "valuable preface." By his advice, and at his dictation, letters were sent,—with copies of the book,—to the Duchess of Devonshire and Mr Wilberforce; while Wordsworth wrote a more elaborate letter to Mr Fox. The latter was published in the *Memoirs* in 1850. Coleridge's to Mr Wilberforce will be published in the forthcoming Memoir of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and in Mrs Sandford's *Thomas Poole and his Friends*. Both the letters were transcribed by Coleridge and sent to Poole in January 1801, "because the two contain a good view of our notions and motives, poetical and political." The following was Wordsworth's letter:—

"GRASMERE, NEAR AMBLESIDE, WESTMORELAND,
"April 9th [1801].

"MY DEAR POOLE,—. . . . In the last Poem of my 2nd volume I have attempted to give a picture of a man, of strong mind and lively sensibility, agitated by two of the most powerful affections of the human heart; the parental affection, and the love of property (*landed* property), including the feelings of inheritance, home, and personal and family independence. This poem has, I know, drawn tears from the eyes of more than one who were well acquainted with the manners of the 'Statesmen,' as they are called, of this country; and, moreover, persons who never wept, in reading verse, before. This is a favourable augury for me. But, nevertheless, I am anxious to know the effect of this poem upon you, on many accounts; because you are yourself the inheritor of an estate which has long been in possession of your family; and, above all, because you are so well acquainted, nay, so familiarly conversant with the language, manners, and feelings of the middle order of people who dwell in the country. Though from the comparative infrequency of small landed properties in your neighbourhood, your situation has not been altogether so favourable as mine, yet your daily and hourly intercourse with these people must have far more than counterbalanced any disadvantage of this kind; so that, all things considered, perhaps there is not in England a more competent judge than you must be, of the skill or knowledge with which my pictures are drawn. I had a still further wish that this poem should please you, because in writing it I had your character often before my eyes; and sometimes thought that I was delineating such a man as you yourself would have been under the same circumstances.

"Do not suspect me of a wish to bribe you into an admiration of the poem in question. By this time, no doubt,

you must have read it, and it must have had a fair trial upon you,

"I am now come to the circumstance which was the *determining* cause of my writing to you. The second volume is throughout miserably printed, and after line, page 210,

'Receiving from his Father hire of praise,'

by a shameful negligence of the printer there is an omission of fifteen lines absolutely necessary to the connection of the poem. If, in the copy sent to you, this omission has not been supplied, you may be furnished with half a sheet which has been reprinted, if you have any acquaintance who will call at Longman's for it, and send it down to you. In the meanwhile, my sister will transcribe for you the omitted passage. I should be vexed if your copy is an imperfect one, as it must have then been impossible for you to give the poem a fair trial. Remember me affectionately to your mother, and also to Ward, and believe me, dear Poole, yours sincerely,

W. WORDSWORTH."

"We shall be highly delighted to see you in this country. I hope you will be able to stay some time with us. Coleridge was over at Grasmere a few days ago: he was both in better health and in better spirits than I have seen him for some time. He is a great man, and if God grant him life, will do great things. My sister desires to be affectionately remembered to you, and your mother, not forgetting Ward.

W. W."

"*Christabel* is to be printed at the Bulmerian Press, with vignettes, &c., &c. I long to have the book in my hand, it will be such a beauty. Farewell."

Wordsworth's letter to Mr Fox is as follows:—

"SIR,—It is not without much difficulty that I have summoned the courage to request your acceptance of these volumes. Should I express my real feelings, I am sure that I should seem to make a parade of diffidence and humility.

"Several of the poems contained in these volumes are written upon subjects which are the common property of all poets, and which, at some period of your life, must have been interesting to a man of your sensibility, and perhaps may still continue to be so. It would be highly gratifying to me to suppose that even in a single instance the manner in which I have treated these general topics should afford you any pleasure; but such a hope does not influence me on the present occasion, in truth I do not feel it. Besides, I am convinced that there must be many things in this collection, which may impress you with an unfavourable idea of my intellectual powers. I do not say this with a wish to degrade myself, but I am sensible that this must be the case, from the different circles in which we have moved, and the different objects with which we have been conversant.

"Being utterly unknown to you, as I am, I am well aware, that if I am justified in writing to you at all, it is necessary that my letter should be short; but I have feelings within me which I hope will so far show themselves in this letter as to excuse the trespass which I am afraid I shall make. In common with the whole of the English people, I have observed in your public character a constant predominance of sensibility of heart. Necessitated as you have been, from your public situation, to have much to do with men in bodies and in classes, and accordingly to contemplate them in that relation, it has been your praise that you have not thereby been prevented from looking upon them as individuals, and that you have habitually left your

heart open to be influenced by them in that capacity. This habit cannot but have made you dear to poets; and I am convinced that if, since your first entrance into public life, there has been a single true poet living in England, he must have loved you.

"But were I assured that I myself had a just claim to the title of a poet, all the dignity being attached to the word which belongs to it, I do not think that I should have ventured for that reason to offer these volumes to you: at present it is solely on account of two poems in the second volume—the one entitled *The Brothers*, the other *Michael*—that I have been emboldened to take this liberty.

"It appears to me that the most calamitous effect which has followed the measures, which have lately been pursued in this country, is a rapid decay of the domestic affections among the lower orders of society. This effect the present Rulers of this country are not conscious of, or they disregard it. For many years past, the tendency of society amongst almost all the nations of Europe has been to produce it. But recently, by the spreading of manufactures through every part of the country, by the heavy taxes upon postage, by workhouses, Houses of Industry, and the invention of Soup Shops, &c., &c.,—superadded to the increasing disproportion between the price of labour and that of the necessaries of life,—the bonds of domestic feeling, as far as the influence of these things has extended, have been weakened, and, in innumerable instances, entirely destroyed. The evil would be the less to be regretted, if these institutions were regarded as palliatives to a disease; but the vanity and pride of their promoters is so subtly interwoven with them that they are deemed great discoveries and blessings to humanity. In the meantime, parents are separated from their children, and children from their parents; the wife no longer prepares with her own hands a meal for her husband, the produce of

his labour; there is little doing in his house about which his affections can be interested, and but little left in it which he can love. I have two neighbours, a man and his wife, both upwards of eighty years of age—they live alone; the husband has been confined to his bed many months, and has never had, nor till within these few weeks has ever needed, anybody to attend to him but his wife. She has recently been seized with a lameness, which has often prevented her from being able to carry his food to his bed, the neighbours fetch water for her from the well, and do other kind offices for them both; but her infirmities increase. She told my servant two days ago that she was afraid they must both be boarded out amongst some other Poor of the parish; (they have long been supported by the parish), but she said it was hard, after having kept house together so many years, to come to this, and she was sure 'that it would burst her heart.' I mention this fact to show how deeply the spirit of independence is, even yet, rooted in some parts of the country. These people could not express themselves in this way without an almost sublime conviction of the blessings of independent domestic life. If it is true, as I believe, that this spirit is rapidly disappearing, no greater curse can befall a land.

"I earnestly entreat your pardon for having detained you so long. In the two poems, *The Brothers* and *Michael*, I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections, as I know they exist amongst a class of men who are now almost confined to the North of England. They are small, independent proprietors of land, here called Statesmen, men of respectable education, who daily labour in their own little properties. The domestic affections will always be strong among men who live in districts not crowded with population, if these men are placed above poverty. But if they are proprietors of small estates which have descended to

them from their ancestors, the power which these affections will acquire among such men is inconceivable by those who have only had an opportunity of observing hired labourers, farmers, and the manufacturing poor. Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a table upon which they are written, which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances, when they would otherwise be forgotten. It is a fountain fitted to the nature of social man, from which supplies of affection, as pure as his heart was intended for, are daily drawn. This class of men is rapidly disappearing.

"You, sir, have a consciousness, upon which every good man will congratulate you, that the whole of your public conduct has, in one way or other, been directed to the preservation of this class of men and those who hold similar situations. You have felt that the most sacred of all property is the property of the poor. The two poems which I have mentioned were written with a view to show that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply. *'Pectus enim est quod disertos facit, et vis mentis. Ideoque imperitis quoque si modo sint aliquo affectu concitati, verba non desunt.'*

"The poems are faithful copies from nature, and I hope, whatever effect they may have upon you, you will at least be able to perceive that they may excite profitable sympathies in many kind and good hearts, and may in some small degree enlarge our feelings of reverence for our species, and our knowledge of human nature, by showing that our best qualities are possessed by some whom we are too apt to consider, not with reference to the points in which they resemble us, but to those in which they manifestly differ from us. I thought, at a time when these feelings are sapped in so many ways, that the two poems might co-operate, however feebly, with the illustrious efforts which you have made to stem this and other evils, with which the country is labour-

ing; and it is on this account alone that I have taken the liberty of thus addressing you.

"Wishing earnestly that the time may come when the country may perceive what it has lost by neglecting your advice, and hoping that your latter days may be attended with health and comfort, I remain, with the highest respect and admiration, &c., &c.

W. WORDSWORTH."

The remarks of two of Wordsworth's friends and contemporaries (Coleridge and Lamb) on the publication of the second volume of *The Lyrical Ballads*, may be quoted as a sequel to this letter to Mr Fox.

A sentence or two, however, as to Coleridge's movements must precede the extracts from his letters.

Coleridge came down to Keswick early in May 1801. He settled in Greta Hall more than two years before Southey's arrival there. Southey did not come down till July 1803; but it was at his urgent entreaty that Coleridge went to live at Keswick. Southey wrote to him from Bristol (April 13, 1801), and it was the prospect of the society of Wordsworth, not far off, that was the chief inducement he put before him.* In July 1801 we find Southey writing again from Bristol to Coleridge at Greta Hall, "I feel here as a stranger; somewhat of Leonard's feeling. God bless Wordsworth for that poem."†

The following extracts from letters of Coleridge to Godwin, and to Sir Humphrey Davy, cast light on Wordsworth's work, at this time. The one dated October 9, 1800, is specially interesting, as indicating Coleridge's idea of *Christabel*, his appreciation of Wordsworth, his modesty in reference to *The Lyrical Ballads*, the original intention of the two men to print *Christabel* and *The Excursion* (or a part of the latter)

* *Life and Correspondence of Southey*, vol. ii., p. 178.

† *Ibid.*, vol. ii. 150; compare Wordsworth's poem, *The Brothers*.

in a volume by themselves, as well as Coleridge's appreciation of *Ruth*, and of the lyric, *Three years she grew in sun and shower*. This letter has also a special interest, in its relation to Wordsworth's work, from the condemnation which Coleridge afterwards passed on him for writing short pieces instead of devoting himself to *The Recluse* as the work of his life.

Writing to William Godwin on May 21, 1800, Coleridge said :

" . . . If I settle at Keswick, Davy will be with me in the fall of the year, and so must you. And let me tell you Godwin, four such men—as you, I, Davy, and Wordsworth—do not meet together in one house every day of the year. I mean, four men so distinct, with so many sympathies. . . ."

Again, on Sept. 11, 1800 : " . . . Here, too, you will meet with Wordsworth, 'the latchet of whose shoe I am unworthy to unloose;' and five miles from Wordsworth Charles Lloyd has taken a house."

Again,

" KESWICK, *Friday Evening, July 25, 1800.*

" . . . Wordsworth is such a lazy fellow, that I bemire myself by making promises for him. The moment I received your letter, I wrote to him. He will, I hope, write immediately to Biggs and Cottle. At all events, those poems must not as yet be delivered up to them, because that beautiful poem, 'The Brothers,' which I read to you in Paul Street, I neglected to deliver to you, and that must begin the volume. I trust, however, that I have invoked the sleeping bard with a spell so potent, that he will awake and deliver up that sword of Argantyr, which is to rive the enchanted *Gaudyverse* from his crown to his foot. . . .

S. T. COLERIDGE." *

* *Fragmentary Remains of Sir Humphrey Davy, Bart.* Edited by John Davy, M.D. Pp. 77, 78.

again,

"Thursday Night, October 9, 1800.

"... As to myself, I am doing little worthy the relation. I write for Stuart in the *Morning Post*, and I am impelled by the god Pecunia, which was one name of the preme Jupiter, to give a volume of letters from Germany, which will be a decent *lounge* book, and not an atom more. The 'Christabel' was running up to 1300 lines, and was so much admired by Wordsworth, that he thought it indelicate to print two volumes with his name, in which so much of another man's was included; and which was of more consequence, the poem was in direct opposition to the very purpose for which the *Lyrical Ballads* were published, viz., an experiment to see how far those passions which alone give any value to extraordinary incidents were capable of interesting in and for themselves in the incidents of common life. We mean to publish the *Christabel*, therefore, with a long blank verse poem of Wordsworth's, entitled *The Ruin*. I assure you I think very differently of *Christabel*. I would rather have written 'Ruth' and 'Nature's Lady' than a million such poems. By why do I calumniate my friend's spirit, by saying I would rather? God knows it is as rightful to me that they *are* written. I *know* that at present, and I *hope* that it *will* be so; my mind has *disinclined* itself into a willing exertion of its powers, without any reference to their comparative value. . . .

"Wordsworth is fearful you have been much teased by the printers on his account, but you can sympathise with him. . . . Fronting our house the Greta runs into the river. . . . Greta, or rather Grieta, is exactly the *grytus* of the Greeks; the word, literally rendered in modern English, is, 'The loud Lamenting;' to griet, in the Cornish dialect, signifying to roar aloud for grief or pain,

and it does, *roar* with a vengeance! . . . God bless you!
—Your most affectionate, S. T. COLERIDGE.*

Again,

"Greta Hall, Tuesday Night, December 2, 1800.

". . . Wordsworth has nearly finished the concluding poem. It is of a mild, unimposing character, but full of beauties to those short-necked men who have their hearts sufficiently near their heads—the relative distance of which (according to citizen Tourder, the French translator of Spallanzani) determines the sagacity or stupidity of all bipeds or quadrupeds.

"There is a deep blue cloud over the heavens; the lake, and the vales, and the mountains, are all in darkness; only the *summits* of all the mountains in long ridges, covered with snow, are bright to a dazzling excess. A glorious scene! . . . God love you! S. T. COLERIDGE.†

On the 25th March 1801, Coleridge wrote thus to William Godwin:—‡

"Have you seen the second volume of the 'Lyrical Ballads,' and the preface prefixed to the first? I should judge of a man's heart and intellect, precisely according to the degree and intensity of the admiration with which he read these poems. Perhaps instead of heart, I should have said taste, but when I think of *The Brothers*, of *Ruth*, and of *Michael*, I recur to the expression, and am enforced to say heart. If I die, and the booksellers will give you anything for my life, be sure to say; 'Wordsworth descended on him like the *Γνώθι σεαυτόν* from heaven, by showing to him what true poetry was, he made him know that he himself was no Poet.'"

* *Fragmentary Remains of Sir Humphrey Davy, Bart.* Edited by John Davy, M.D. Pp. 81-83.

† *Ibid.*, p. 85.

‡ *William Godwin: his friends and contemporaries.* By C. Kegan Paul Vol. ii., p. 79.

The following is the fragment of a letter from Charles Lamb—(part being lost),—on the reappearance of the Ballads, in two volumes. Lamb's inaccuracy, in quoting the poems by titles of his own, is characteristic.

"Thanks for your letter, and present. I had already borrowed your second volume. What most please me are, 'The Song of Lucy;' *Simon's sickly daughter*, in 'The Sexton,' made me cry. Next to these are the description of the continuous echoes, in the story of 'Joanna's Laugh,' where the mountains, and all the scenery absolutely seem alive; and that fine *Shakespearian* character of the 'happy man,' in the 'Brothers.' I will mention one more—the delicate and curious feeling in the wish for the 'Cumberland Beggar,' that he may have about him the melody of birds, although he hear them not. Here the mind knowingly passes a fiction upon herself, first substituting her own feelings for the Beggar's; and, in the same breath detecting the fallacy, will not part with the wish. The 'Poet's Epitaph' is disfigured, to my taste, by the common satire upon parsons and lawyers in the beginning, and the coarse epithet of 'pinpoint,' in the sixth stanza. All the rest is eminently good, and your own. I will just add that it appears to me a fault in the 'Beggar,' that the instructions conveyed in it are too direct, and like a lecture: they don't slide into the mind of the reader while he is imagining no such matter. An intelligent reader finds a sort of insult in being told, 'I will teach you how to think upon this subject.' This fault, if I am right, is in a ten-thousandth worse degree to be found in Sterne, and very many novelists and modern poets, who continually put a sign-post up to show where you are to feel. They set out with assuming their readers to be stupid; very different from 'Robinson Crusoe,' the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' 'Roderick Random,' and other beautiful bare narratives. There is

implied an unwritten compact between author and reader: 'I will tell you a story, and I suppose you will understand it.' Modern novels, 'St Leon' and the like, are full of such flowers as these—'Let not my reader suppose,' 'Imagine, if you can, &c.' Modest! I will here have done with praise and blame. I have written so much, only that you may not think I have passed over your book without observation. . . . I am sorry that Coleridge has christened his 'Ancient Mariner' 'a Poet's Reverie.' It is as bad as Bottom the Weaver's declaration that he is not a lion, but only the scenical representation of a lion. What new idea is gained by his title but one subversive of all credit—which the tale should force upon us,—of its truth?

"For me, I was never so affected with any human tale. After first reading it, I was totally possessed with it for many days. I dislike all the miraculous part of it, but the feeling of the man under the operation of such scenery, dragged me along like Tom Pipes's magic whistle. I totally differ from the idea that the 'Mariner' should have had a character and profession. This is a beauty in 'Gulliver's Travels,' where the mind is kept in a placid state of little wonderments; but the 'Ancient Mariner' undergoes such trials, as overwhelm and bury all individuality, or memory of what he was—like the state of a man in a bad dream, one terrible peculiarity of which is, that all consciousness of personality is gone. Your other observation is, I think as well, a little unfounded; the 'Mariner,' from being conversant in supernatural events, *has* acquired a super-nature and strange cast of *phrase*, eye, appearance, &c., which frighten the 'wedding-guest.' You will excuse my remarks, because I am hurt and vexed that you should think it necessary, with a prose apology, to open the eyes of dead men that cannot see.

"To sum up a general opinion of the second volume, I do

not feel any one poem in it so forcibly as the 'Ancient Mariner,' the 'Mad Mother,' and the 'Lines at Tintern Abbey,' in the first."*

Wordsworth had written to Lamb in 1800, asking him to buy him some copies of the old English dramatists, and Lamb's very characteristic reply will be found among his letters, edited by Sergeant Talfourd (vol. i., pp. 170-173). A subsequent letter, in answer to Wordsworth's invitation to his friend to visit him in Cumberland, may be quoted, as it casts much light on the relationship and the differences between the two men.

"I ought before this to have replied to your very kind invitation into Cumberland. With you and your sister I could gang anywhere; but I am afraid whether I shall ever be able to afford so desperate a journey. Separate from the pleasure of your company, I don't now care if I never see a mountain in my life. I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments, as any of you mountaineers can have done with dead nature. The lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet Street, the innumerable trades, tradesmen, and customers, coaches, waggons, playhouses; all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden; the watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles;—life awake, if you awake, at all hours of the night; the impossibility of being dull in Fleet Street; the crowds, the very dirt and mud, the sun shining upon houses and pavements, the print-shops, the old book-stalls, parsons cheapening books, coffee-houses, steams of soups from kitchens, the pantomimes—London itself a pantomime and a masquerade—all these things work themselves into my mind, and feed me without a power of satiating me. The wonder of these sights impels me into night-walks about her

* *Final Memorials of Charles Lamb.* By Thomas Noon Talfourd. Vol. i., pp. 144-147.

crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fulness of joy at so much life. All these emotions must be strange to you ; so are your rural emotions to me. But consider what must I have been doing all my life, not to have lent great portions of my heart with usury to such scenes ?

“ My attachments are all local, purely local. I have no passion (or have had none since I was in love, and then it was the spurious engendering of poetry and books) to groves and valleys. The rooms where I was born, the furniture which has been before my eyes all my life, a book-case which has followed me about like a faithful dog (only exceeding him in knowledge) wherever I have moved,—old chairs, old tables, streets, squares, where I have sunned myself, my old school,—these are my mistresses—have I not enough without your mountains ? I do not envy you. I should pity you did I not know that the mind will make friends of anything. Your sun, and moon, and skies, and hills, and lakes, affect me no more, or scarcely come to me in more venerable characters, than as a gilded room with tapestry and tapers, where I might live with handsome visible objects. I consider the clouds above me but as a roof beautifully painted, but unable to satisfy the mind ; and at last, like the pictures of the apartment of a connoisseur, unable to afford him any longer a pleasure. So fading upon me, from disuse, have been the beauties of Nature, as they have been confinedly called ; so ever fresh, and green, and warm are all the inventions of men, and assemblies of men in this great city. I should certainly have laughed with dear Joanna.*

* Alluding to the “Poem on the Naming of Places” called *Joanna*, and the effect of the echo of her laughter amongst the mountains.

"Give my kindest love, and my sister's, to D. and yourself. And a kiss from me to little Barbara Lewthwaite.* Thank you for liking my play !† C. L."

With all the charms of Grasmere and Rydal, it will be seen, from a letter which Coleridge sent to Humphrey Davy in 1801, that Wordsworth at least entertained the idea of migrating across to Keswick; and the reason Coleridge gives is worthy of note. William Calvert (Raisley's brother) had an ardent desire to begin the study of chemistry, along with Wordsworth and Coleridge, and offered the former his house at Windy Brow, Keswick (in which Wordsworth had stayed in 1794); and Coleridge tells Davy that Wordsworth felt his acceptance of the offer would not only bring him nearer to Greta Hall, but would enable him to "have an intellectual pursuit less closely connected with deep passion than poetry." This points to the wearing out of nervous energy, by exclusive devotion to his poetic work, of which we have so many evidences in his sister's Journal.

The following is Coleridge's letter to Davy:—

February 3, 1801.‡

"... A gentleman resident here, his name Calvert, an idle, good-hearted, and ingenious man, has a great desire to commence fellow-student with me and Wordsworth in Chemistry. He is an intimate friend of Wordsworth's, and he has proposed to W. to take a house which he (Calvert) has nearly built, called Windy Brow, in a delicious situation, scarce half a mile from Greta Hall, the residence of S. T. Coleridge, Esq., and so for him (Calvert) to live with

* See the poem, *The Pet Lamb*.

† *The Letters of Charles Lamb*. By Thomas Noon Talfourd, vol. i., pp. 212-215.

‡ See the *Fragmentary Remains of Sir Humphrey Davy, Bt.* Ed. by John Davy, M.D., pp. 86, 87.

them, *i.e.*, Wordsworth and his sister. In this case he means to build a little laboratory, &c. Wordsworth has not quite decided, but is strongly inclined to adopt the scheme, because he and his sister have before lived with Calvert on the same footing, and are much attached to him: because my health is so precarious, and so much injured by wet, and his health, too, is like little potatoes, no great things, and therefore Grasmere (thirteen miles from Keswick) is too great a distance for us to enjoy each other's society, without inconvenience, as much as it would be profitable for us both: and likewise because he feels it more necessary for him to have some intellectual pursuit less closely connected with deep passion than poetry, and is of course desirous, too, not to be so wholly ignorant of knowledge so exceedingly important. However, whether Wordsworth come or no, Calvert and I have determined to begin and go on. Calvert is a man of sense and some originality, and is, besides, what is well called a handy man. He is a good practical mechanic, &c., and is desirous to lay out any sum of money that is necessary. . . . —God bless you, my dear Davy! and your ever affectionate friend,

S. T. COLERIDGE."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RECLUSE.

THE unpublished canto of Wordsworth's autobiographical poem will fitly precede any extracts from the Journals of 1800 and subsequent years, as it is the Poet's own record of his "Home at Grasmere."

The introduction to *The Recluse* was not only kept back by him during his lifetime, but was omitted by his representatives—with what must be regarded as true critical insight—when *The Prelude* was published in 1850. As a whole, it is not equal to *The Prelude*; certain passages are very inferior, but there are others that posterity will cherish, and cannot willingly let die. It was probably a conviction of its inequality and inferiority that led Wordsworth to give selected extracts from this canto to the world in his own lifetime. Two passages were given in his *Guide to the District of the Lakes*; another—a description of the flight and movement of birds—was published in 1827, and subsequent editions, under the title of *Water Fowl*; while the Bishop of Lincoln published other two passages in the *Memoirs* of his uncle, beginning respectively—

"On Nature's invitation do I come,"

and

"Bleak season was it, turbulent and wild."

Although these five short passages have been already printed in this edition, it will be better now to reproduce the whole of the as yet unpublished canto as it stands, than to mutilate it by omitting a few lines already familiar to the readers of Wordsworth. Future editors may find it desirable to make "selections" from this canto, but in this

which the "Home at Grasmere" will stand untouched, and
 without comment. The MS. heading is—

THE RECLUSE. BOOK FIRST, PART FIRST.

HOME AT GRASMERE.

Came to the verge of yon steep barrier came
 A roving school-boy; what the Adventurer's age
 Hath now escaped his memory—but the hour,
 One of a golden summer holiday,
 He well remembers, though the year be gone.
 Alone and devious from afar he came;
 And with a sudden influx overpowered
 At sight of this seclusion, he forgot
 His haste, for hasty had his footsteps been
 As boyish his pursuits; and, sighing said,
 "What happy fortune were it here to live!
 And, (if a thought of dying, if a thought
 Of mortal separation, could intrude
 With paradise before him), here to die!"
 No prophet was he, had not even a hope,
 Scarcely a wish, but one bright pleasing thought,
 A fancy in the heart of what might be
 The lot of others, never could be his.

The station whence he looked was soft and green,
 Not giddy yet aerial, with a depth
 Of vale below, a height of hills above.
 For rest of body, perfect was the spot,
 All that luxurious nature could desire,
 But stirring to the spirit. Who could gaze
 And not feel motions there? He thought of clouds
 That sail on winds, of breezes that delight
 To play on water, or in endless chase
 Pursue each other through the yielding plain

Of grass or corn, over and through and through,
In billow after billow, evermore
Disporting. Nor unmindful was the Boy
Of sunbeams, shadows, butterflies and birds,
Of fluttering Sylphs, and softly-gliding Fays,
Genii, and winged Angels that are Lords
Without restraint of all which they behold.
The illusion strengthening as he gazed, he felt
That such unfettered liberty was his,
Such power and joy ; but only for this end,
To flit from field to rock, from rock to field,
From shore to island, and from isle to shore,
From open ground to covert, from a bed
Of meadow-flowers into a tuft of wood,
From high to low, from low to high, yet still
Within the bound of this high concave ; here
Must be his home, this Valley be his world.

Since that day forth the place to him—to *me*
(For I who live to register the truth
Was that same young and happy being) became
As beautiful to thought, as it had been,
When present, to the bodily sense ; a haunt
Of pure affections, shedding upon joy
A brighter joy ; and through such damp and gloom
Of the gay mind, as oftentimes splenetic youth
Mistakes for sorrow darting beams of light
That no self-cherished sadness could withstand :
And now 'tis mine, perchance for life, dear Vale,
Beloved Grasmere (let the Wandering Streams
Take up, the cloud-capped hills repeat, the Name),
One of thy lowly dwellings is my Home.

And was the cost so great ? and could it seem
An act of courage, and the thing itself
A conquest ? who must bear the blame ? sage man

Thy prudence, thy experience—thy desires;
Thy apprehensions—blush thou for them all.

Yes, the realities of life so cold,
So cowardly, so ready to betray,
So stinted in the measure of their grace
As we pronounce them, doing them much wrong,
Have been to me more bountiful than hope,
Less timid than desire—but that is passed.

On Nature's invitation do I come,
By reason sanctioned—Can the choice mislead,
That made the calmest fairest spot of earth,
With all its unappropriated good,
My own; and not mine only, for with me
Entrenched, say rather peacefully embowered,
Under yon orchard, in yon humble cot,
A younger orphan of a home extinct,
The only daughter of my parents, dwells.

Aye, think on that, my heart, and cease to stir,
Pause upon that, and let the breathing frame
No longer breathe, but all be satisfied.
Oh if such silence be not thanks to God
For what hath been bestowed, then where, where
Shall gratitude find rest? Mine eyes did ne'er
Fix on a lovely object, nor my mind
Take pleasure in the midst of happy thoughts,
But either She whom now I have, who now
Divides with me this loved abode, was there,
Or not far off. Where'er my footsteps turned,
Her Voice was like a hidden Bird that sang,
The thought of her was like a flash of light,
Or an *unseen* companionship, a breath,
Or fragrance independent of the wind.
In all my goings, in the new and old
Of all my meditations, and in this

Favourite of all, in this the most of all.
—What Being, therefore, since the birth of man
Had ever more abundant cause to speak
Thanks, and if favours of the heavenly Muse
Make him more thankful, then to call on verse
To aid him, and in Song resound his joy.
The boon is absolute ; surpassing grace
To me hath been vouchsafed ; among the bowers
Of blissful Eden this was neither given,
Nor could be given, possession of the good
Which had been sighed for, ancient thought fulfilled
And dear Imaginations realized
Up to their highest measure, yea and more.

Embrace me then ye Hills, and close me in,
Now in the clear and open day I feel
Your guardianship ; I take it to my heart ;
'Tis like the solemn shelter of the night.
But I would call thee beautiful, for mild
And soft, and gay, and beautiful thou art,
Dear Valley, having in thy face a smile
Though peaceful, full of gladness. Thou art pleased,
Pleased with thy crags, and woody steeps, thy Lake,
Its one green Island and its winding shores ;
The multitude of little rocky hills,
Thy Church and cottages of mountain stone
Clustered like stars some few, but single most,
And lurking dimly in their shy retreats,
Or glancing at each other cheerful looks,
Like separated stars with clouds between.
What want we ? have we not perpetual streams,
Warm woods, and sunny hills, and fresh green fields,
And mountains not less green, and flocks, and herds,
And thickets full of songsters, and the voice
Of lordly birds, an unexpected sound

Heard now and then from morn till latest eve,
Admonishing the man who walks below
Of solitude, and silence in the sky.
These have we, and a thousand nooks of earth
Have also these, but no where else is found
No where (or is it fancy) can be found
The one sensation that is here ; 'tis here,
Here as it found its way into my heart
In childhood, here as it abides by day,
By night, here only ; or in chosen minds
That take it with them hence, where'er they go.
'Tis, but I cannot name it, 'tis the sense
Of majesty, and beauty, and repose,
A blended holiness of earth and sky,
Something that makes this individual Spot,
This small abiding-place of many men,
A termination, and a last retreat,
A centre come from wheresoe'er you will,
A whole without dependence or defect,
Made for itself ; and happy in itself,
Perfect contentment, unity entire.

Bleak season was it, turbulent and wild,
When hitherward we journeyed, side by side,
Through bursts of sunshine and through flying show-
Paced the long Vales—how long they were—and ye—
How fast that length of way was left behind,
Wensley's rich Vale and Sedbergh's naked heights.
The frosty wind, as if to make amends
For its keen breath, was aiding to our steps,
And drove us onward like two ships at sea,
Or like two birds, companions in mid air,
Parted and re-united by the blast.
Stern was the face of Nature. We rejoiced
In that stern countenance, for our souls thence drew

A feeling of their strength. The naked trees,
The icy brooks, as on we passed, appeared
To question us, "Whence come ye? to what end?"
They seemed to say. "What would ye," said the shower,
"Wild wanderers, whither through my dark domain?"
The sunbeam said, "Be happy." When this Vale
We entered, bright and solemn was the sky
That faced us with a passionate welcoming,
And led us to our threshold. Daylight failed
Insensibly, and round us gently fell
Composing darkness, with a quiet load
Of full contentment, in a little shed
Disturbed, uneasy in itself as seemed,
And wondering at its new inhabitants.
It loves us now, this Vale so beautiful
Begins to love us! By a sullen storm,
Two months unwearied of severest storm,
It put the temper of our minds to proof,
And found us faithful through the gloom, and heard
The Poet mutter his prelusive songs
With cheerful heart, an unknown voice
Among the silence of the woods and hills;
Silent to any gladness of sound
With all their Shepherds.

But the gates of Spring
Are opened. Churlish Winter hath given leave
That she should entertain for this one day,
Perhaps for many genial days to come,
His guests, and make them jocund. They are pleased,
(But most of all the Birds that haunt the flood),
With the mild summons; inmates though they be
Of winter's household, they keep festival
This day, who drooped, or seemed to droop, so long;
They shew their pleasure, and shall I do less?

Happiest of happy though I be, like them
 I cannot take possession of the sky,
 Mount with a thoughtless impulse, and wheel there,
 One of a mighty multitude, whose way
 Is a perpetual harmony, and dance
 Magnificent. Behold, how with a grace
 Of ceaseless motion, that might scarcely seem
 Inferior to angelical, they prolong
 Their curious pastime, shaping in mid air,
 And sometimes with ambitious wing that soars
 High as the level of the mountain tops,
 A circuit ampler than the lake beneath,
 Their own domain ; but ever, while intent
 On tracing and retracing that large round,
 Their jubilant activity evolves
 Hundreds of curves and circlets, to and fro,
 Upward and downward, progress intricate
 Yet unperplexed, as if one spirit swayed
 Their indefatigable flight. 'Tis done—
 Ten times, or more, I fancied it had ceased ;
 But lo ! the vanished company again
 Ascending, they approach—I hear their wings
 Faint, faint at first ; and then an eager sound
 Passed in a moment—and as faint again !
 They tempt the sun to sport among their plumes ;
 Tempt the smooth water, or the gleaming ice,
 To show them a fair image ; 'tis themselves,
 Their own fair forms, upon the glimmering plain,
 Painted more soft and fair as they descend,
 Almost to touch ;—then up again aloft,
 Up with a sally, and a flash of speed,
 As if they scorned both resting-place and rest ! *
 This day is a thanksgiving, 'tis a day

* The last twenty-six lines were published under the title *Water*
 in the edition of 1827.

motion and deep quietness ;
 me alone hath been bestowed,
 many onward-looking thoughts,
 rating bliss, oh surely these
 it, not the happy Quires of Spring,
 peculiar family of love
 among green leaves, a blither train.
 are missing—two, a lonely pair
 white Swans, wherefore are *they* not seen
 this day's pleasure ? From afar
 e to sojourn here in solitude,
 this Valley, they who had the choice
 sole world. We saw them day by day,
 these two months of unrelenting storm,
 us at the centre of the Lake,
 retreat. We knew them well, I guess
 whole Valley knew them ; but to us
 e more dear than may be well believed,
 for their beauty, and their still
 d way of life, and constant love
 le, not for these alone,
their state so much resembled ours,
 ing also chosen this abode ;
 ngers, and we strangers ; they a pair,
 a solitary pair like them.
 uld not have departed ; many days
 k forth in vain, nor on the wing
 e them, nor in that small open space
 unfrozen water, where they lodged,
 d so long in quiet, side by side.
 behold them, consecrated friends,
 companions, yet another year
 g—they for us, and we for them—
 her pair be broken ? Nay perchance

It is too late already for such hope,
The Dalesmen may have aimed the deadly tube,
And parted them; or haply both are gone
One death, and that were mercy given to both.
Recal my song the ungenerous thought; forgive,
Thrice favoured Region, the conjecture harsh
Of such inhospitable penalty,
Inflicted upon confidence so pure.
Ah, if I wished to follow where the sight
Of all that is before mine eyes, the voice
Which speaks of a presiding Spirit here,
Would lead me, I should whisper to myself,
They who are dwellers in this holy place
Must needs themselves be hallowed, they require
No benediction from the stranger's lips,
For they are blest already. None would give
The greeting "peace be with you" unto them,
For peace they have, it cannot but be theirs,
And mercy, and forbearance; nay, with these,
Their healing offices a pure goodwill
Preludes, and charity beyond the bounds
Of charity—an overflowing love,
Not for the creature only, but for all
That is around them, love for every thing
Which in this happy region they behold!

Thus do we soothe ourselves, and when the thought
Is past we blame it not for having come.
What, if I floated down a pleasant Stream
And now am landed, and the motion gone,
Shall I reprove myself? Ah no, the stream
Is flowing, and will never cease to flow,
And I shall float upon that stream again.
By such forgetfulness the soul becomes,
Words cannot say, how beautiful. Then hail,

Hail to the visible Presence, hail to thee,
Delightful Valley, habitation fair !
And to whatever else of outward form
Can give us inward help, can purify,
And elevate, and harmonise, and soothe,
And steal away, and for a while deceive
And lap in pleasing rest, and bear us on
Without desire in full complacency,
Contemplating perfection absolute
And entertained as in a placid sleep.

But not betrayed by tenderness of mind
That feared, or wholly overlooked the truth,
Did we come hither, with romantic hope
To find, in midst of so much loveliness,
Love, perfect love ; of so much majesty
A like majestic frame of mind in those
Who here abide, the persons like the place.
Not from such hope, or aught of such belief
Hath issued any portion of the joy
Which I have felt this day. An awful voice,
'Tis true, hath in my walks been often heard,
Sent from the mountains or the sheltered fields ;
Shout after shout—reiterated whoop
In manner of a bird that takes delight
In answering to itself ; or like a hound
Single at chase among the lonely woods,
His yell repeating ; yet it was in truth
A human voice—a Spirit of coming night,
How solemn when the sky is dark, and earth
Not dark, nor yet enlightened, but by snow
Made visible, amid a noise of winds
And bleatings manifold of mountain sheep,
Which in that iteration recognise
Their summons, and are gathering round for food,

Devoured with keenness e'er to grove or bank
Or rocky *bield* with patience they retire.

That very voice, which, in some timid mood
Of superstitious fancy, might have seemed
Awful as ever stray Demoniac uttered,
His steps to govern in the Wilderness;
Or as the Norman Curfew's regular beat,
To hearths when first they darkened at the knell:
That Shepherd's voice, it may have reached mine ear
Debased and under profanation, made
The ready Organ of articulate sounds
From ribaldry, impiety, or wrath

Issuing when shame hath ceased to check the brow
Of some abused Festivity—so be it.

I came not dreaming of unruffled life,
Untainted manners; born among the hills,
Bred also there, I wanted not a scale
To regulate my hopes. Pleased with the good,
I shrink not from the evil with disgust,
Or with immoderate pain. I look for Man,
The common creature of the brotherhood,
Differing but little from the Man elsewhere,
For selfishness, and envy, and revenge,
Ill neighbourhood—pity that this should be—
Flattery and double dealing, strife and wrong.

Yet is it something gained, it is in truth
A mighty gain, that Labour here preserves
His rosy face, a servant only here
Of the fire-side, or of the open field,
A freeman, therefore, sound and unimpaired;
That extreme penury is here unknown,
And cold and hunger's abject wretchedness,
Mortal to body, and the heaven-born mind;
That they who want, are not too great a weight

For those who can relieve. Here may the heart
Breathe in the air of fellow-suffering
Dreadless, as in a kind of fresher breeze
Of her own native element, the hand
Be ready and unwearied without plea
From tasks too frequent, or beyond its power
For languor, or indifference, or despair.
And as these lofty barriers break the force
Of winds, this deep Vale,—as it doth in part
Conceal us from the storm,—so here abides
A power and a protection for the mind,
Dispensed indeed to other solitudes,
Favoured by noble privilege like this,
Where kindred independence of estate
Is prevalent, where he who tills the field,
He, happy man ! is master of the field,
And treads the mountain which his fathers trod.

Not less than half way up yon Mountain's side
Behold a dusky spot, a grove of Firs,
That seems still smaller than it is. This grove
Is haunted—by what ghost ? a gentle spirit
Of memory faithful to the call of love ;
For, as reports the dame, whose fire sends up
Yon curling smoke from the grey cot below,
The trees (her first-born child being then a babe)
Were planted by her husband and herself,
That ranging o'er the high and houseless ground
Their sheep might neither want, (from perilous storms
Of winter, nor from summer's sultry heat),
A friendly covert. "And they knew it well,"
Said she, "for thither as the trees grew up,
We to the patient creatures carried food
In times of heavy snow." She then began
In fond obedience to her private thoughts

To speak of her dead husband. Is there not
An art, a music, and a strain of words
That shall be like the acknowledged voice of life,
Shall speak of what is done among the fields,
Done truly there, or felt, of solid good
And real evil, yet be sweet withal,
More grateful, more harmonious than the breath,
The idle breath of softest pipe attuned
To pastoral fancies? Is there such a stream,
Pure and unsullied, flowing from the heart
With motions of true dignity and grace?
Or must we seek that stream where Man is not?
Methinks I could repeat in tuneful verse,
Delicious as the gentlest breeze that sounds
Through that aerial fir-grove, could preserve
Some portion of its human history
As gathered from the Matron's lips, and tell
Of tears that have been shed at sight of it,
And moving dialogues between this pair,
Who in their prime of wedlock, with joint hands
Did plant the grove, now flourishing, while they
No longer flourish, he entirely gone,
She withering in her loneliness. Be this
A task above my skill; the silent mind
Has her own treasures, and I think of these,
Love what I see, and honour humankind.

No, we are not alone, we do not stand,
My Sister, here misplaced and desolate,
Loving what no one cares for but ourselves;
We shall not scatter through the plains and rocks
Of this fair Vale, and o'er its spacious heights
Unprofitable kindness, bestowed
On objects unaccustomed to the gifts
Of feeling, which were cheerless and forlorn

few weeks past, and would be so again
ere we not here; we do not tend a lamp
whose lustre we alone participate,
which shines dependent upon us alone,
fatal though bright, a dying, dying flame.
Where we will, some human hand has been
ere us with its offering; not a tree
makes these little pastures but the same
a furnished matter for a thought; perchance,
some one, serves as a familiar friend.
Sorrow spreads, and sorrow spreads; and this whole Vale,
like of untutored shepherds as it is,
fills with sensation, as with gleams of sunshine,
flows or breezes, scents or sounds. Nor deem
these feelings, though subservient more than ours
every day's demand for daily bread,
and borrowing more their spirit, and their shape
from self-respecting interests, deem them not
worthy therefore, and unhallowed: no,
they lift the animal being, do themselves
Nature's kind and ever-present aid
to drive the selfishness from which they spring,
to deem by love the individual sense
anxiousness with which they are combined.
Thus it is that fitly they become
sociates in the joy of purest minds,
they blend therewith congenially: meanwhile,
only they breathe their own undying life
though this their mountain sanctuary. Long,
long may it remain inviolate,
preserving health, and sober cheerfulness,
and giving to the moments as they pass
their little boons of animating thought
to sweeten labour, make it seen and felt

To be no arbitrary weight imposed,
But a glad function natural to man.

Fair proof of this, newcomer though I be,
Already have I gained. The inward frame
Though slowly opening, opens every day
With process not unlike to that which cheers
A pensive stranger, journeying at his leisure
Through some Helvetian dell, when low-hung mists
Break up, and are beginning to recede;
How pleased he is when thin and thinner grows
The veil, or where it parts at once, to spy
The dark pines thrusting forth their spiky heads;
To watch the spreading lawns with cattle grazed,
Then to be greeted by the scattered huts,
As they shine out; and *see* the streams whose murmur
Had soothed his ear while they were hidden: how pleased
To have about him, which way e'er he goes,
Something on every side concealed from view,
In every quarter something visible,
Half-seen or wholly, lost and found again,
Alternate progress and impediment,
And yet a growing prospect in the main.

Such pleasure now is mine, albeit forced;
Herein less happy than the traveller
To cast from time to time a painful look
Upon unwelcome things, which unawares
Reveal themselves; not therefore is my heart
Depressed, nor does it fear what is to come,
But confident, enriched at every glance.
The more I see the more delight my mind
Receives, or by reflexion can create.
Truth justifies herself, and as she dwells
With Hope, who would not follow where she leads.
Nor let me pass unheeded other loves

Where no fear is, and humbler sympathies.
Already hath sprung up within my heart
A liking for the small grey horse that bears
The paralytic man, and for the brute—
In Scripture sanctified—the patient brute,
On which the cripple, in the quarry maimed,
Rides to and fro: I know them and their ways.
The famous sheep-dog, first in all the Vale,
Though yet to me a stranger, will not be
A stranger long; nor will the blind man's guide,
Meek and neglected thing, of no renown!
Soon will peep forth the primrose, ere it fades
Friends shall I have at dawn, blackbird and thrush
To rouse me, and a hundred warblers more;
And if those eagles to their ancient hold
Return, Helvellyn's eagles! with the pair
From my own door I shall be free to claim
Acquaintance as they sweep from cloud to cloud.
The owl that gives the name to owlet-crag
Have I heard whooping, and he soon will be
A chosen one in my regard. See there
The heifer in yon little croft belongs
To one who holds it dear; with duteous care
She reared it, and in speaking of her charge
I heard her scatter some endearing words
Domestic, and in spirit motherly
She being herself a mother, happy beast
If the caresses of a human voice
Can make it so, and care of human hands.

And ye as happy under Nature's care,
Strangers to me, and all men, or at least
Strangers to all particular amity,
All intercourse of knowledge or of love
That parts the individual from his kind,

Whether in large communities ye keep
From year to year, not shunning Man's abode,
A settled residence, or be from far,
Wild creatures, and of many homes, that come
The gift of winds, and whom the winds again
Take from us at your pleasure—yet shall ye
Not want, for this, your own subordinate place
In my affections. Witness the delight
With which erewhile I saw that multitude
Wheel through the sky, and see them now at rest,
Yet not at rest, upon the glassy lake.
They *cannot* rest, they gambol like young whelps;
Active as lambs, and overcome with joy.
They try all frolic motions; flutter, plunge,
And beat the passive water with their wings.
Too distant are they for plain view, but lo!
Those little fountains, sparkling in the sun,
Betray their occupation, rising up,
First one and then another silver spout,
As one or other takes the fit of glee,
Fountains and spouts, yet somewhat in the guise
Of play-thing fire-works, that on festal nights
Sparkle about the feet of wanton boys.
How vast the compass of this theatre,
Yet nothing to be seen but lovely pomp
And silent majesty; the birch-tree woods
Are hung with thousand thousand diamond drops
Of melted hoar-frost, every tiny knot
In the bare twigs, each little budding place
Cased with its several bead, what myriads there
Upon one tree, while all the distant grove
That rises to the summit of the steep
Show like a fountain built of silver light.
See yonder the same pageant, and again

Behold the universal imagery
Inverted, all its sun-bright features touched
As with the varnish, and the gloss of dreams ;
Dreamlike the blending also of the whole
Harmonious landscape, all along the shore
The boundary lost, the line invisible
That parts the image from reality ;
And the clear hills, as high as they ascend
Heavenward, so piercing deep the lake below.
Admonished of the days of love to come
The raven croaks, and fills the upper air
With a strange sound of genial harmony ;
And in and all about that playful band,
Incapable although they be of rest,
And in their fashion very rioters,
There is a stillness, and they seem to make
Calm revelry in that their calm abode.
Them leaving to the joyous hours I pass,
Pass with a thought the life of the whole year
That is to come, the throng of woodland flowers,
And lilies that will dance upon the waves.

Say boldly then that solitude is not
Where these things are. He truly is alone,
He of the multitude whose eyes are doomed
To hold a vacant commerce day by day
With objects wanting life, repelling love ;
He in the vast Metropolis immured,
Where pity shrinks from unremitting calls,
Where numbers overwhelm humanity,
And neighbourhood serves rather to divide
Than to unite. What sighs more deep than his,
Whose nobler will hath long been sacrificed ;
Who must inhabit, under a black sky,
A City where, if indifference to disgust

Yield not, to scorn, or sorrow, living men
Are oftentimes to their fellow-men no more
Than to the forest hermit are the leaves
That hang aloft in myriads—nay, far less,
For they protect his walk from sun and shower,
Swell his devotion with their voice in storms,
And whisper while the stars twinkle among them
His lullaby. From crowded streets remote,
Far from the living and dead wilderness
Of the thronged world, Society is here
A true Community, a genuine frame
Of many into one incorporate.

That must be looked for here, paternal sway,
One household under God for high and low,
One family, and one mansion ; to themselves
Appropriate, and divided from the world
As if it were a cave, a multitude
Human and brute, possessors undisturbed
Of this recess, their legislative hall,
Their Temple, and their glorious dwelling-place.

Dismissing therefore, all Arcadian dreams,
All golden fancies of the golden age,
The bright array of shadowy thoughts from times
That were before all time, or is to be
Ere time expire, the pageantry that stirs,
And will be stirring when our eyes are fixed
On lovely objects, and we wish to part
With all remembrance of a jarring world,
Take we at once this one sufficient hope,
What need of more ? that we shall neither droop,
Nor pine for want of pleasure in the life
Scattered about us, nor through dearth of aught
That keeps in health the insatiable mind ;
That we shall have of knowledge and of love

Abundance ; and that, feeling as we do
How goodly, how exceeding fair, how pure
From all reproach is yon ethereal vault,
And this deep vale its earthly counterpart,
By which, and under which, we are enclosed
To breathe in peace, we shall moreover find
(If sound, and what we ought to be ourselves,
If rightly we observe and justly weigh)
The inmates not unworthy of their home
The dwellers of their dwelling.

And if this
Were otherwise, we have within ourselves
Enough to fill the present day with joy,
And overspread the future years with hope,
Our beautiful and quiet home, enriched
Already with a stranger whom we love
Deeply, a stranger of our father's house,
A never-resting Pilgrim of the Sea,*
Who finds at last an hour to his content
Beneath our roof. And others whom we love
Will seek us also, sisters of our hearts,†
And one, like them, a brother of our hearts,
Philosopher and Poet,‡ in whose sight
These mountains will rejoice with open joy.
—Such is our wealth ; O Vale of Peace, we are
And must be, with God's will, a happy band.

Yet 'tis not to enjoy that we exist,
For that end only ; something must be done.
I must not walk in unproved delight
These narrow bounds, and think of nothing more,
No duty that looks further, and no care.
Each being has his office, lowly some
And common, yet all worthy if fulfilled

* John Wordsworth.

† The Hutchinsons.

‡ Coleridge.

With zeal, acknowledgment that with the gift
Keeps pace, a harvest answering to the seed
Of ill-advised ambition and of pride.
I would stand clear, but yet to me I feel
That an internal brightness is vouchsafed
That must not die, that must not pass away.
Why does this inward lustre fondly seek,
And gladly blend with outward fellowship?
Why do *they* shine around me whom I love?
Why do they teach me whom I thus revere?
Strange question, yet it answers not itself.
That humble roof embowered among the trees,
That calm fire-side, it is not even in them,
—Blest as they are—to furnish a reply,
That satisfies and ends in perfect rest.
Possessions have I that are solely mine,
Something within which yet is shared by none,
Not even the nearest to me and most dear,
Something which power and effort may impart,
I would impart it, I would spread it wide.
Immortal in the world which is to come,
Forgive me if I add another claim,
And would not wholly perish even in this,
Lie down and be forgotten in the dust,
I and the modest partners of my days
Making a silent company in death;
Love, knowledge, all my manifold delights
All buried with me without monument
Or profit unto any but ourselves.
It must not be, if I, divinely taught,
Be privileged to speak as I have felt
Of what in man is human or divine.
While yet an innocent little-one, with a heart
That doubtless wanted not its tender moods,

I breathed (for this I better recollect)
Among wild appetites and blind desires,
Motions of savage instinct, my delight
And exaltation. Nothing at that time
So welcome, no temptation half so dear
As that which urged me to a daring feat.
Deep pools, tall trees, black chasms, and dizzy crags,
And tottering towers; I loved to stand and read
Their looks forbidding, read and disobey,
Sometimes in act, and evermore in thought.
With impulses that scarcely were by these
Surpassed in strength, I heard of danger, met
Or sought with courage; enterprize forlorn
By one, sole keeper of his own intent,
Or by a resolute few who for the sake
Of glory, fronted multitudes in arms.
Yea to this hour I cannot read a tale
Of two brave vessels matched in deadly fight,
And fighting to the death, but I am pleased
More than a wise man ought to be. I wish,
Fret, burn, and struggle, and in soul am there;
But me hath Nature tamed, and bade me seek
For other agitations, or be calm;
Hath dealt with me as with a turbulent stream,
Some nursling of the mountains, which she leads
Through quiet meadows, after he has learnt
His strength, and had his triumph and his joy,
His desperate course of tumult and of glee.
That which in stealth by Nature was performed
Hath Reason sanctified. Her deliberate voice
Hath said, 'Be mild and cleave to gentle things,
Thy glory and thy happiness be there.
Nor fear, though thou confide in me, a want
Of aspirations that *have* been, of foes

To wrestle with, and victory to complete,
Bounds to be leapt, darkness to be explored,
All that inflamed thy infant heart, the love,
The longing, the contempt, the undaunted guest,
All shall survive—though changed their offices—
Shall live, it is not in their power to die.*

Then farewell to the Warrior's schemes, farewell
The forwardness of soul which looks that way
Upon a less incitement than the cause
Of Liberty endangered, and farewell
That other hope, long mine, the hope to fill
The heroic trumpet with the Muse's breath!
Yet in this peaceful Vale we will not spend
Unheard of days, though loving peaceful thoughts.
A voice shall speak, and what will be the theme? *

* There follows in the MS. which contains the above canto—

“On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life
Musing in Solitude.”

(See the Preface to *The Excursion*.)

CHAPTER XV.

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH'S GRASMERE JOURNAL.

For far the best record of the life at Dove Cottage, and of how the Poet and his Sister spent their time at Grasmere, is contained in Dorothy Wordsworth's daily Journal. What we have read of it extends from May 14 to Dec. 21, 1800, and from Oct. 10, 1801, to Jan. 16, 1803. There can be no hesitation about printing a large part of that Journal, or of the most precious extracts from it. It gives the most vivid picture of the influence of the sister upon the brother; showing how—womanhood as in girlhood—"she gave him eyes and gave him ears." From the Journal we learn—as from no other source we could learn—how they walked, read, and wrote together; of the visitors they received; of their frequent wanderings on the mountains, but more especially round Grasmere and Rydal; of how William and his brother John went out to fish, and to bathe in the lakes; of how, in the evenings, they drank tea and played whist in neighbours' houses; of the way in which Dorothy's "inward eye" noted the change of the seasons, the fleeting loveliness as well as the underlying meaning of each natural object; of the circumstances under which each one of the Poems of these years was begun, continued, and ended; of those "moods of his own mind" which enabled him to complete one of them in a single hour, and compelled him to labour for months over another. We hear of stray incidents in the life of the salesmen, or of travelling pedlars, who became the subjects of

poems; of the books the household read, and the gardening work they did, and the details of kindly service rendered by the sister to the brother;—above all, of the interviews with Coleridge,* his frequent visits to Grasmere, and Dorothy's long talks with him there, the Wordsworths accompanying him to the poet's trysting-place at Wytheburn (Sara's rock), and their return visits to Keswick, the arrivals at the cottage of Mary Hutchinson, of Jones (with whom Wordsworth travelled on the Continent), of Clarkson (the future philanthropist) and his wife—these, and a score of other things, are to be found in this Journal.

It is possible that some may think the record too minute, and too uniform. Posterity, however, may wish to know more of these things than some of our contemporaries may care for them; and the very contrast of our present mode of life, and what is possible nowadays, with the routine in that cottage, may add an interest to the fragments that record it. It is easy to criticise it, as the daily inventory of the doings of a small household; but the Journal itself is the best evidence that the charge so often brought against the Wordsworths of self-centredness, or self-involvement, is much exaggerated. What more fitting than those daily records of weather-changes, and of the face of Nature all around them,

* One of the things we learn from these Journals is the immense number of letters that passed between the Wordsworth and Coleridge family, particularly from Coleridge to Dorothy Wordsworth, and from Dorothy to him, all written at the very height and spring-time of their genius, which have apparently perished. Many of Coleridge's must have been full of interest; but where are they? People don't write such letters nowadays. (See the volume of Coleridge Letters.) The very capacity for such writing has departed; displaced perhaps, in part, by the progress of journalism. They were essays rather than letters. To read one is like having a long morning's talk with a friend; and when there were no morning papers, or morning post, what more natural or delightful? We may wonder at the frequent walks to Ambleside, but that was the post town; and to go there, in almost all weathers, was a regular part of the life of the household at Dove Cottage.

in the Journal of a household that daily looked on Nature with the "inward eye"? Besides, one of the chief lessons that the perusal of this Journal teaches is the wisdom of the "wise passiveness" that simply "watches and receives." Many and many a time did Wordsworth and his sister enjoy divine feasts of silence, in the mere presence of Nature, with no intrusive chatter of remark, no critical commentary, or "aside;" and the chief justification of printing copious extracts from their Journal is the increasing need we have—in the haste and high pressure of our modern life—to escape into solitude, and to be alone with Nature. The perusal of such a Journal may be helpful to some, in showing them where especially the "healing power" of Wordsworth's poetry is to be found.

It is also interesting as showing the way in which many of Wordsworth's poems were composed, the great labour he bestowed on some of the apparently simplest ones, the effort which their composition was to him, the actual pain it cost, and the repeated revision to which they were all subjected. Over and over again the sister records, "William wearied himself with composing." "William fatigued himself with altering." "W. could not sleep, thinking of his poem." We find records of the poetic fire being suddenly kindled,—it might be by a chance remark of hers, about a daisy, or a butterfly—and so long as the fit was upon him, so long as the inspired mood lasted, he could neither sleep, nor eat, nor attend to any lesser interest. But it involved far more toil, and even severe labour, than the majority imagine. Wordsworth was familiar with "poetic pains," although to him there was added the compensating pleasure "which only poets know."

Another thing to be noted in the life led by the Wordsworths in that humble cottage at Grasmere is the simple and almost austere calmness with which it developed itself,

and bore fruit. There was no rush of excitement, from an old to a new interest; no taking up of the latest fashion, and (as soon as it became tedious by familiarity) again craving "some new thing," urged on by the mere stimulus of change; and, in consequence, no premature exhaustion of the power of vision, and the power of enjoyment. It is the penalty, which a too early unfolding of any natural capacity has to pay for its premature development, that it exhausts itself, and satiety sets in. The Wordsworths were poor, and they were not ashamed to be poor. They lived for a great end, and they pursued that end through all hindrance, in all weathers (so to speak), and with a self-denial that was heroic. Even if we grant that there was some self-involvement; how, it may be said, could it be otherwise? They loved their mountain solitude, and found in it "blithe society;" and thus a type of character was developed, which for lack of these very surroundings of calm and quiet, runs the risk of becoming rare. As Mr Aubrey de Vere says profoundly:* "Talents rush to the market, the theatre, or the arena, and genius itself becomes vulgarised for want of that 'hermit heart' which ought to belong to it."

It has another side, however. There is no doubt that their long walks on the mountains, and the utter want of regularity as to hours for meals, &c.—perhaps an inevitable element in that poetic household—injured the sister's health. The records in her Journal (which are not published), giving signs of this, are most pathetic; and while her ministry of service to her brother is one of the most beautiful things recorded in the annals of literature, it may surely be said that the brother should not have accepted so much, and should have noted the injury she was inflicting on herself. But if she had not thus injured herself, we should probably not now possess

* See the *Memoir of Sara Coleridge*, vol. i., p. 52.

some of the poems that are richest in teaching and healing power for posterity. Are we to construe even this injury to the sister as an inevitable outcome of the law of sacrifice?

In 1805, Wordsworth addressed some exquisite lines to his sister, under the characteristic title, "To a Young Lady who had been reproached for taking long walks in the country;" and in these lines, beginning

"Dear Child of Nature, let them rail,"

he anticipated for his sister a future home—"a nest in a green dale"—where she should see "her own heart-stirring days." That prophecy was never fulfilled, and though she lived to nearly the age of eighty-four—four years longer than her brother—her old age was not "serene and bright." This, however, is to anticipate.

The following are extracts from the Grasmere Journal:—

"14th May, 1800.—William and John set off into Yorkshire after dinner at half-past two o'clock. . . . I left them at the turning of the Low Wood bay under the trees. My heart was so full that I could hardly speak to W. when I said farewell. I sate a long time upon a stone at the margin of the lake, and after a flood of tears my heart was easier. The lake looked to me, I knew not why, dull and melancholy, and the weltering on the shores seemed a heavy sound. I walked as long as I could amongst the stones of the shore. The wood rich in flowers; a beautiful yellow (palish yellow) flower, that looked thick, round, and double—the smell very sweet (I supposed it was a ranunculus), crowfoot, the grassy-leaved rabbit-looking white flower, strawberries, geraniums, scentless violets, anemones, two kinds of orchises, primroses, the heckberry very beautiful, the crab coming out as a low shrub. . . . Came home by Clappersgate. The valley very green; many sweet views up

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to Rydal, when I could juggle away the fine houses; but they disturbed me, even more than when I have been happier; one beautiful view of the bridge, without St Michaels;* sate down very often, though it was cold. I resolved to write a journal of the time, till W. and J. return. . . . I shall give William pleasure by it when he comes home. . . .

"*Friday Morning, 16th.*— . . The woods extremely beautiful with all autumnal variety and softness. I carried a basket for mosses, and gathered some wild plants. Oh! that we had a book of botany. All flowers now are gay and deliciously sweet. The primrose still prominent; the later flowers and the shiny foxgloves very tall, with their heads budding. I went forward round the lake at the foot of Loughrigg Fell. I was much amused with the business of a pair of stone chats; their restless voices as they skimmed along the water, following each other, their shadows under them, and their returning back to the stones on the shore, chirping with the same unwearied voice. Could not cross the water, so I went round by the stepping-stones. . . . Rydal was very beautiful with spear-shaped streaks of polished steel. . . . Grasmere very solemn in the last glimpse of twilight. It calls home the heart to quietness. . . . In my walk back I had many of my saddest thoughts, and I could not keep the tears within me. But when I came to Grasmere I felt that it did me good. I finished my letter to M. H. . . .

"*Saturday.*—Incessant rain from morning till night. . . . Worked hard, and read *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and ballads. Sauntered a little in the garden. The blackbird sate quietly in its nest, rocked by the wind, and beaten by the rain.

* *I.e.*, Grasmere Church.

"*Sunday 19th.*— . . Letters from Coleridge and Cottle. John Fisher* overtook me on the other side of Rydal. He talked much about the alteration in the times, and observed that in a short time there would be only two ranks of people, the very rich and the very poor, 'for those who have small estates,' says he, 'are forced to sell, and all the land goes into one hand.' Did not reach home till ten o'clock.

"*Monday.*—Sauntered a good deal in the garden, bound carpets, mended old clothes, read *Timon of Athens*, dried linen. . . . Walked up into the Black Quarter. I sauntered a long time among the rocks above the church. The most delightful situation possible for a cottage, commanding two distinct views of the vale and of the lake, is among those rocks. . . . The quietness and still seclusion of the valley affected me even to producing the deepest melancholy. I forced myself from it. The wind rose before I went to bed. . . .

"*Tuesday Morning.*—A fine mild rain. . . . Everything seen and overflowing with life, and the streams making a perpetual song, with the thrushes, and all little birds, not forgetting the stone chats. . . .

"*Sunday.*— . . Read *Macbeth* in the morning; sate under the trees after dinner. . . . I wrote to my brother Christopher. . . . On my return found a letter from Coleridge and from Charles Lloyd, and three papers.

"*Monday, May 26.*— . . Wrote letters to J. H., Coleridge, Col. LL, and W. I walked towards Rydal, and turned aside at my favourite field. The air and the lake were still. One cottage light in the vale, and so much of day left that I could distinguish objects, the woods, trees, and houses. Two or three different kinds of birds sang at intervals on

* Their neighbour at Townend who helped Wordsworth to make the steps up to the orchard in Dove Cottage garden.

plainly once been fair. She led a little barefooted child about two years old by the hand, and said her husband, who was a tinker, was gone before with the other children. I gave her a piece of bread. Afterwards, on my way to Ambleside, beside the bridge at Rydal, I saw her husband sitting by the roadside, his two asses feeding beside him, and the two young children at play upon the grass. The man did not beg. I passed on, and about a quarter of a mile further I saw two boys before me, one about ten, the other about eight years old, at play chasing a butterfly. They were wild figures, not very ragged, but without shoes and stockings. The hat of the elder was wreathed round with yellow flowers; the younger, whose hat was only a rimless crown, had stuck it round with laurel leaves. They continued at play till I drew very near, and then they addressed me with the begging cant and the whining voice of sorrow. I said I served your mother this morning. (The boys were so like the woman who had called at our door that I could not be mistaken.) 'O!' says the elder, 'you could not serve my mother, for she's dead, and my father's on at the next town—he's a potter.' I persisted in my assertion, and that I would give them nothing. Says the elder, 'Let's away,' and away they flew like lightning. They had, however, sauntered so long in their road that they did not reach Ambleside before me, and I saw them go up to Matthew Harrison's house, with their wallet upon the elder's shoulder, and creeping with a beggar's complaining foot. On my return through Ambleside, I met in the street the mother driving her asses, in the two panniers of one of which were the two little children, whom she was chiding and threatening with a wand which she used to drive on her asses, while the little things hung in wantonness over the pannier's edge. The woman had told me in the morning that she was of Scotland, which her accent fully proved, but that

she had lived (I think at Wigton), that they could not keep a house, and so they travelled.*

"*Wednesday, 13th June.*— . . We landed upon the island, where I saw the whitest hawthorn I have seen this year—the generality of hawthorns are bloomless. I saw wild roses in the hedges. . . .

"*Friday, 15th June.*—A rainy morning. William and John went upon the lake. Very warm and pleasant, gleams of sunshine. Caught a pike, $7\frac{1}{2}$ lbs., trolling. . . .

"*Monday.*—William and I went to Brathay, by Little Langdale. . . . Colwith wild and interesting, from the peat carts and peat gatherers. The valley all perfumed with the gale and wild thyme. The woods about the waterfall bright with rich yellow broom. . . . We met a pretty little boy with a wallet over his shoulder. He came from Hawkshead and was going to sell a sack of meal. He spoke gently and without complaint. When I asked him if he got enough to eat, he looked surprised, and said 'Nay.' He was seven years old, but seemed not more than five. . . .

"*Thursday.*— . . W. and I walked up to Mr Simpson's. W. and old Mr S. went to fish in Wytheburn water. I dined with John, and lay under the trees. The afternoon changed from clear to cloudy, and to clear again. John and I walked up to the waterfall. . . . Met the fishers. W. caught a pike weighing $4\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. There was a gloom almost terrible over Grasmere water and vale. . . . No Coleridge, whom we fully expected. . . .

"*Saturday.*—Walked up the hill to Rydal lake. Grasmere looked so beautiful that my heart was almost melted

* Compare *Beggars*, vol. ii., pp. 247-252.

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* Compare *Beggars*, vol. ii., pp. 247-252.

away. It was quite calm, only spotted with sparkles of light; the church visible. On our return all distant objects had faded away, all but the hills. The reflection of the light bright sky above Black Quarter was very solemn. . . .

"*Sunday*.— . . . In the evening I planted a honeysuckle round the yew tree. . . . No news of Coleridge. . . .

"*Wednesday*.— . . . On Sunday, Mr and Mrs Coleridge and Hartley came. The day was very warm. We sailed to the foot of Loughrigg. They staid with us three weeks, and till the Thursday following, from 1st till the 23rd of July. On the Friday preceding their departure, we drank tea at the island. The weather was delightful, and on the Sunday we made a great fire, and drank tea in Bainriggs with the Simpsons. I accompanied Mrs C. to Wytheburn. . . .

"*Sunday Morning, 26th*.—Very warm. . . . I wrote *out* *Ruth* in the afternoon. . . . After tea we rowed down to Loughrigg Fell, visited the white foxglove, gathered wild strawberries, and walked up to view Rydal. We lay a long time looking at the lake; the shores all dim with the scorching sun. The ferns were turning yellow, that is, here and there one was quite turned. We walked round by Benson's wood home. The lake was now most still, and reflected the beautiful yellow and blue and purple and grey colours of the sky. We heard a strange sound in the Bainriggs wood, as we were floating on the water; it seemed in the wood, but it must have been above it, for presently we saw a raven very high above us. It called out, and the dome of the sky seemed to echo the sound.* It called again and again as it flew onwards, and the mountains gave

* Compare vol. v., p. 193.

back the sound, seeming as if from their centre; a musical bell-like answering to the bird's hoarse voice. We heard both the call of the bird, and the echo, after we could see him no longer. . . .

"*Monday Morning.*—Received a letter from Coleridge enclosing one from Mr Davy about the *Lyrical Ballads*. Intensely hot. . . . William went into the wood and altered his poems. . . .

"*Thursday.*—All the morning I was busy copying poems. In the afternoon Coleridge came. He brought the second volume of Anthology. The men went to bathe, and we afterwards sailed down to Loughrigg. Read poems on the water, and let the boat take its own course. We walked a long time upon Loughrigg. I returned in the grey twilight. The moon just setting as we reached home.

"*Friday, 1st August.*—In the morning I copied *The Brothers*. Coleridge and William went down to the lake. They returned, and we all went together to Mary Point, where we sate in the breeze and the shade, and read William's poems. Altered *The Whirlblast*, &c. . . .

"*Saturday Morning, 2nd.*—William and Coleridge went to Keswick. John went with them to Wytheburn, and staid all day fishing. . . .

"*Wednesday, 6th August.*—William came home from Keswick at eleven o'clock. . . .

"*Friday Morning.*—We intended going to Keswick, but were prevented by the excessive heat. Nailed up scarlet beans in the morning. . . . Walked over the mountains by Wattendlath. . . . A most enchanting walk. Wattendlath a heavenly scene. Reached Coleridge's at eleven o'clock.

"*Saturday Morning*.—I walked with Coleridge in the Windy Brow woods.

"*Sunday*.—Very hot. The C.'s went to church. We sailed upon Derwent in the evening.

"*Monday Afternoon*.—Walked to Windy Brow.

"*Tuesday*.— . . . William and I walked along the Cocker-mouth road. He was altering his poems.

"*Wednesday*.—Made the Windy Brow seat.

• • • • •
" *Sunday, 16th August*.— . . . William read us the *Seven Sisters*.

• • • • •
" *Saturday, 22nd*.— . . . William composing all the morning. . . . The gleams of sunshine and the stirring trees and gleaming boughs, cheerful lake, most delightful . . . W. read *Peter Bell* and the poem of *Joanna*, beside the Rothay by the roadside.

• • • • •
" *Friday Evening, 28th August*.—We walked to Rydal to inquire for letters. We walked over the hill by the fir-grove. I sate upon a rock, and observed a flight of swallows gathering together high above my head. They flew towards Rydal. We walked through the wood over the stepping-stones. The lake of Rydal very beautiful, partly still. John and I left William to compose an inscription; that about the path.* We had a very fine walk by the gloomy lake. There was a curious yellow reflection in the water, as of corn fields. There was no light in the clouds from which it appeared to come.

" *Saturday Morning, 28th August*.— . . . William finished his Inscription of the Pathway, then walked in the wood;

* Compare vol. viii., p. 132.

and when John returned he sought him, and they bathed together. I read a little of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

"*Sunday, 29th.*— . . . A great deal of corn is cut in the vale, and the whole prospect, though not tinged with a general autumnal yellow, yet softened down into a mellowness of colouring, which seems to impart softness to the forms of hills and mountains. At eleven o'clock Coleridge came when I was walking in the still clear moonshine in the garden. He came over Helvellyn. William was gone to bed, and John also, worn out with his ride round Coniston. We sat and chatted till half-past three, . . . Coleridge reading a part of *Christabel*. Talked much about the mountains, &c., &c. . . .

"*Monday Morning, 1st September.*—We walked in the wood by the lake. W. read *Joanna* and the *Firgrove* to Coleridge. They bathed. The morning was delightful, with somewhat of an autumnal freshness. After dinner, Coleridge discovered a rock seat in the orchard. Cleared away brambles. . . . I chatted with John and Coleridge till near twelve.

"*Tuesday, 2nd.*—In the morning they all went to Stickle Tarn. A very fine, warm, sunny, beautiful morning. . . . The fair day. . . . There seemed very few people and very few stalls, yet I believe there were many cakes and much beer sold. My brothers came home to dinner at six o'clock. . . . It was a lovely moonlight night. We talked much about a house on Helvellyn. The moonlight shone only upon the village. It did not eclipse the village lights, and the sound of dancing and merriment came along the still air. I walked with Coleridge and William up the lane and by the church, and then lingered with Coleridge in the garden. John and William were both gone to bed and all the lights out.

"*Wednesday, 3rd September.*—Coleridge, William, and

John went . . . upon Helvellyn with Mr Simpson. They set out after breakfast. I accompanied them up near the blacksmith's . . . I then went to a funeral at John Dawson's. About ten men and four women. Bread, cheese, and ale. They talked sensibly and cheerfully about common things. The dead person, fifty-six years of age, buried by the parish. The coffin was neatly lettered and painted black, and covered with a decent cloth. They set the corpse down at the door, and while we stood within the threshold the men, with their hats off, sang, with decent and solemn countenances, a verse of a funeral psalm. The corpse was then borne down the hill, and they sang till they had passed the Town-end. I was affected to tears while we stood in the house, the coffin lying before me. There were no near kindred, no children. When we got out of the dark house the sun was shining, and the prospect looked as divinely beautiful as I ever saw it. It seemed more sacred than I had ever seen it, and yet more allied to human life. The green fields in the neighbourhood of the churchyard were green as possible, and with the brightness of the sunshine, looked quite gay. I thought she was going to a quiet spot, and I could not help weeping very much. When we came to the bridge they began to sing again, and stopped during four lines before they entered the churchyard. . . .

"Friday, 12th September.— . . . The fern of the mountains now spreads yellow veins among the trees; the coppice wood turns brown. William observed some affecting little things in Borrowdale. A decayed house with this inscription in the churchyard, the tall, silent rocks seen through the broken windows. A sort of rough column put upon the gable end of a house, with a ball stone smooth from the river-island upon it for ornament. Near it, a stone like it upon an old mansion, carefully hewn.

"*Saturday, 13th September.*—Morning. William writing his Preface*—did not walk. . . .

"*Sunday morning, 14th.*— . . . A lovely day. Read Boswell in the house in the morning, and after dinner under the bright yellow leaves of the orchard. The pear trees a bright yellow. The apple trees green still. . . . John came home in the evening after Jones left. Jones returned again on the Friday, the 19th September. Jones stayed with us till Friday, 26th September. Coleridge came in.

"*Sunday, 27th.*—We . . . heard of the Abergavenny's arrival. . . .

"*Monday, 29th.*—John left us. Wm. and I parted with him in sight of Ulswater. It was a fine day, showery, but with sunshine and fine clouds. Poor fellow, my heart was right sad. I could not help thinking we should see him again, because he was only going to Penrith.

"*Tuesday, 3rd September.*— . . . Rydal was extremely old, and we had a fine walk. We sate quietly and comfortably by the fire. I wrote the last sheet of Notes and Preface.* Went to bed at twelve o'clock.

"*Wednesday, 1st October.*— . . . The lake still in the morning. In the forenoon flashing light from the beams of the sun, as it was ruffled by the wind. We corrected the last sheet.* . . . We walked after dinner to observe the torrents. . . . The Black Quarter looked marshy, and the general prospect was cold, but the *force* was very grand. The lichens are now coming out afresh. I carried home a collection in the afternoon. We had a pleasant conversation about the manners of the rich, avarice, inordinate desires; and the effeminacy, unnaturalness, and unworthy objects of education. . . . The moonlight lay upon the hills like snow.

* Evidently the Notes and Preface to the 2nd edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.

"*Friday, 3rd October.*—Very rainy all the morning. . . . William talked much about the object of his essay for the second volume of 'L. B.' . . . Amos Cottle's death in the *Morning Post*. . . . When William and I returned from accompanying Jones, we met an old man almost double. He had on a coat, thrown over his shoulders, above his waistcoat and coat. Under this he carried a bundle, and had an apron on and a night-cap. His face was interesting. He had dark eyes and a long nose. John, who afterwards met him at Wytheburn, took him for a Jew. He was of Scotch parents, but had been born in the army. He had had a wife, and 'she was a good woman, and it pleased God to bless us with ten children.' All these were dead but one, of whom he had not heard for many years, a sailor. His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches were scarce, and he had not strength for it. He lived by begging, and was making his way to Carlisle, where he should buy a few godly books to sell. He said leeches were very scarce, partly owing to this dry season, but many years they have been scarce. He supposed it owing to their being much sought after, that they did not breed fast, and were of slow growth. Leeches were formerly 2s. 6d. per 100; they are now 30s. He had been hurt in driving a cart, his leg broken, his body driven over, his skull fractured. He felt no pain till he recovered from his first insensibility. It was then late in the evening, when the light was just going away.*

"*Saturday, 4th October 1800.*— . . . Read a part of Lamb's Play. The language is often very beautiful, but too imitative in particular phrases, words, &c. The characters, except Margaret, unintelligible, and, except Margaret's, do not show themselves in action. Coleridge came in while we were at dinner, very wet. We talked till twelve o'clock. He had sate up all the night before, writing essays for the

* Compare *The Leechgatherer*, vol. ii., p. 275.

newspaper. . . . Exceedingly delighted with the second part of *Christabel*.

"*Sunday Morning, 5th October.*—Coleridge read *Christabel* a second time; we had increasing pleasure. A delicious morning. William and I were employed all the morning in writing an addition to the Preface. . . . Coleridge and I walked to Ambleside after dark with the letter. . . . Silver How in both lakes.

"*Monday.*—A rainy day. Coleridge intending to go, but did not go off. . . . After tea read *The Pedlar*. Determined not to print *Christabel* with the L. B.

"*Tuesday.*—Coleridge went off at eleven o'clock. . . .

"*Wednesday.*— . . . I copied a part of *The Beggar* in the morning. . . . A very mild moonlight night. Glow-worms everywhere.

"*Friday, 10th October.*—In the morning when I arose the mists were hanging over the opposite hills, and the tops of the highest hills were covered with snow. There was a most lively combination at the head of the vale of the yellow autumnal hills wrapped in sunshine, and overhung with partial mists, the green and yellow trees, and the distant snow-topped mountains. It was a most heavenly morning. The Cockermouth traveller came with thread, hardware, mustard, &c. She is very healthy; has travelled over the mountains these thirty years. She does not mind the storms, if she can keep her goods dry. Her husband will not travel with an ass, because it is the tramper's badge; she would have one to relieve her from the weary load. She was going to Ulverston, and was to return to Ambleside Fair. . . . The fern among the rocks exquisitely beautiful.

. . . Sent off *The Beggar*, &c., by Thomas Ashburner.

. . . William sat up after me, writing *Point Rash Judgment*.

"*Saturday, 11th.*—A fine October morning. Sat in the

house working all the morning. William composing . . . After dinner we walked up Greenhead Gill in search of a sheepfold . . . It was a delightful day, and the views . . . cheerful and beautiful, chiefly that from Mr Ollif's field, where our own house is to be built. The colours of the mountains soft, and rich with orange fern; the cattle pasturing upon the hill-tops; kites sailing in the sky above our heads; sheep bleating, and feeding in the water courses, scattered over the mountains. They come down and feed, on the little green islands in the beds of the torrents, and so may be swept away. The sheepfold is falling away. It is built nearly in the form of a heart unequally divided. Looked down the brook, and saw the drops rise upwards and sparkle in the air at the little falls. The higher sparkled the tallest. We walked along the turf of the mountain till we came to a track made by the cattle which come upon the hills . . .

"*Sunday, October 12th.*— . . . Sate in the house writing in the morning while William went into the wood to compose. Wrote to John in the morning; copied poems for the L. B. . . . We walked before tea by Bainriggs to observe the many-coloured foliage. The oaks dark green with yellow leaves, the birches generally still green, some near the water yellowish, the sycamore crimson and crimson-tufted, the mountain ash a deep orange, the common ash lemon-coloured, but many ashes still fresh in their peculiar green, those that were discoloured chiefly near the water. William composing in the evening. . . .

"*Monday, October 13th.*— A grey day. Mists on the hills. We did not walk in the morning. I copied poems on the Naming of Places. . . .

"*Wednesday.*— A very fine clear morning. After William had composed a little, I persuaded him to go into the orchard; we walked backwards and forwards; the prospect most

divinely beautiful from the seat, colours all melting into each other. I went in to put bread in the oven, and we both walked within view of Rydal. William again composed at the sheepfold after dinner. I walked with him to Wytheburn, and he went on to Keswick. . . . Wytheburn looked very wintry, but yet there was a foxglove blossoming by the roadside.

"*Friday, 17th.*—A very fine grey morning. The swan hunt . . . I walked round the lake. . . . I found William at home, where he had been almost ever since my departure. Coleridge had done nothing for the L. B. Working hard for Stuart.* Glow-worms in abundance.

"*Saturday.*—A very fine October morning. William worked all the morning at the sheepfold, but in vain. . . .

"*Sunday Morning.*—We rose late, and walked directly after breakfast. The tops of Grasmere mountains cut off. Rydal very beautiful. The surface of the water quite still, like a dim mirror. The colours of the large island exquisite, and the trees, still fresh and green, magnified by the mists. . . . We sate at the 'two points.' . . . The lowing of the cattle was echoed by a hollow voice in the vale. . . .

"*Monday, 20th.*—William worked in the morning at the sheepfold. After dinner we walked to Rydal, crossed the stepping-stones, and while we were walking under the tall oak trees, . . . the lights were very grand upon the woody Rydal hills. Those behind dark and tipped with clouds. The two lakes were divinely beautiful. Grasmere excessively solemn, the whole lake calm and dappled with soft grey ripples. . . .

"*Wednesday Morning.*— . . . William composed without much success at the sheepfold. Coleridge came in to dinner.

* Of the *Morning Post*.

He had done nothing. We were very merry. C. and I went to look at the prospect from his seat. . . . William read *Ruth*, &c., after supper. Coleridge read *Christabel*.

"*Thursday, 23rd.*—Coleridge and Stoddart went to Keswick. We accompanied them to Wytheburn. A wintry grey morning from the top of the Raise. Grasmere looked like winter, and Wytheburn still more so. . . . William was not successful in composition in the evening.

"*Friday, 24th.*—A very fine morning. We walked, before William began to work, to the top of the Rydal hill. He was afterwards only partly successful in composition. . . . We walked round Rydal lake, rich, calm, streaked, very beautiful. We went to the top of Loughrigg. Grasmere sadly inferior. . . . The ash in our garden green, one close to it bare, the next nearly so.

"*Saturday.*— . . . William again unsuccessful. We could not walk, it was so very rainy. We read Rogers, Miss Seward, Cowper, &c.

"*Sunday.*— . . . William composed a good deal in the morning. . . .

"*Monday, 28th October.*— . . . William in the firgrove. I had before walked with him there for some time. It was a fine shelter from the wind. The coppices now nearly of one brown. An oak tree in a sheltered place near John Fisher's, not having lost any of its leaves, was quite brown and dry. . . . It was a fine wild moonlight night. William could not compose much. Fatigued himself with altering.

"*Tuesday, 29th.*— . . . We walked out before dinner to our favourite field. The mists sailed along the mountains, and rested upon them, enclosing the whole vale. In the evening the Lloyds came. We played a rubber at whist. . . .

"*Wednesday.*—William worked at his poem all the morning. . . .

"*Friday Night*.— . . . The moon shone like herrings in the water.

"*Tuesday*.— . . . Tremendous wind. The snow blew from Helvellyn horizontally like smoke. . . .

"*Thursday, 6th November*.— . . . Read *Point Rash Judgment*. . . .

"*Friday, 7th November*.— . . . I working and reading *Amelia*. The Michaelmas daisy droops, the pansies are full of flowers, the ashes still green all but one, but they have lost many of their leaves. The copses are quite brown. The poor woman and child from Whitehaven drank tea. . . .

"*Monday*.— . . . Jupiter over the hilltops, the only star, like a sun, flashed out at intervals from behind a black cloud.

"*Tuesday Morning*.— . . . William had been working at the sheepfold. . . . Played at cards. . . .

"*Saturday Morning, 15th November*.—A terrible rain prevented William from going to Coleridge's. The afternoon fine. . . . We both set forward at five o'clock. A fine wild night. I walked with W. over the Raise. It was starlight. I parted with him very sad, unwilling not to go on. The hills and the stars, and the white waters, with their ever varying yet ceaseless sound, were very impressive. . . .

"*Tuesday, December 2nd*.— . . . Coleridge was obliged to set off. . . .

"*Thursday*.—Coleridge came in just as we finished dinner. . . . We walked after tea by moonlight to look at Lang-

dale covered with snow, the pikes not grand, but the Old Man very expressive. Cold and slippery, but exceedingly pleasant. Sat up till half-past one.

"*Friday Morning*.— . . . Coleridge and William set forward towards Keswick, but the wind in Coleridge's eyes made him turn back. . . . We were very merry in the evening, but grew sleepy soon, though we did not go to bed till twelve o'clock.

"*Saturday*.—William accompanied Coleridge to the foot of the Raise. . . . Sara and I accompanied him half way to Keswick. Thirlemere was very beautiful, even more so than in summer. William . . . had laboured unsuccessfully. . . .

"*Tuesday, 9th*.— . . . William finished his poem to-day. . . .

"*Saturday, 10th October 1801*.—Coleridge went to Keswick after we had built Sara's seat.

"*Thursday, 15th*.— . . . Coleridge came in to Mr L.'s while we were at dinner. William and I walked up Lough-rigg Fell, then by the waterside. . . .

"*Saturday, 24th*.—Attempted Fairfield, but misty, and we went no further than Green Head Gill to the sheepfold; mild, misty, beautifully soft. William and Tom put out the boat. . . .

"*Sunday, 25th*.—Rode to Legberthwaite with Tom, expecting Mary. . . . Went upon Helvellyn. Glorious sights. The sea at Cartmel. The Scotch mountains beyond the sea to the right. Whiteside large, and round, and very soft, and green, behind us. Mists above and below, and close to us, with the sun amongst them. They shot down to the coves. . . . Reached home at nine o'clock. A soft grey evening; the light of the moon, but she did not shine on us.

"*Tuesday, 10th November.*—Mary and I sate in C.'s room a while. Poor C. left us, and we came home together. We left Keswick at two o'clock and did not arrive at G. till nine o'clock. . . . Every sight and every sound reminded me of Coleridge—dear, dear fellow, of his many talks to us, by day and by night, of all dear things. I was melancholy, and could not talk, but at last I eased my heart by weeping. . . . O! how many, many reasons have I to be anxious for him.

"*Wednesday, 11th.*— . . Put aside dearest Coleridge's letters, and now, at about seven o'clock, we are all sitting by a nice fire. William with his book and a candle, and Mary writing to Sara.

"*November 16th.*— . . William is reading Spenser. Mary is writing beside me. The little syke murmurs. We are quiet and happy. . . . I am going to write to Coleridge and Sara. Poor C. I hope he was in London yesterday. . . .

"*Wednesday, 18th.*— . . The church an image of peace. William wrote some lines upon it. . . . A sweet sound of water falling into the quiet lake. A storm was gathering in Easedale, so we returned; but the moon came out, and opened to us the church and village. Helm Crag in shade, the larger mountains dappled like a sky. We stood long upon the bridge. . . .

"*Friday, 20th.*—We walked in the morning to Easedale. In the evening we had cheerful letters from Coleridge and Sara.

"*Tuesday, 24th.*— . . It was very windy, and we heard the wind everywhere about us as we went along the lane, but the walls sheltered us. John Green's house looked

pretty under Silver How. As we were going along we were stopped at once, at the distance, perhaps, of fifty yards from our favourite birch tree. It was yielding to the gusty wind with all its tender twigs. The sun shone upon it, and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape, with stem and branches, but it was like a spirit of water. The sun went in, and it resumed its purplish appearance, the twigs still yielding to the wind, but not so visibly to us. The other birch trees that were near it looked bright and cheerful, but it was a creature by its own self among them. . . . We went through the wood. It became fair. There was a rainbow which spanned the lake from the island-house to the foot of Bainriggs. The village looked populous and beautiful. Catkins are coming out; palm trees budding; the alder, with its plumb-coloured buds. We came home over the stepping stones. The lake was foamy with white waves. I saw a solitary butter flower in the wood. . . . Reached home at dinner time. Sent Peggy Ashburner some goose. She sent me some honey, with a thousand thanks. 'Alas, the gratitude of men has,' &c. I went in to set her right about this, and sate a while with her. . . . We sate by the fire without work for some time, then Mary read a poem of Daniel. . . . William read Spenser now and then aloud to us. We were making his waistcoat. We had a note from Mrs C., with bad news from poor C.—very ill. William walked to John's Grove. I went to him. Moonlight, but it rained. . . . He had been surprised and terrified by a sudden rushing of winds, which seemed to bring earth, sky, and lake together, as if the whole were going to enclose him in. . . .

"In speaking of our walk on Sunday evening, the 22nd November, I forgot to notice one most impressive sight. It was the moon and the moonlight seen through hurrying

driving clouds immediately behind the stone-man upon the top of the hill, on the forest side. Every tooth and every edge of rock was visible, and the man stood like a giant watching from the roof of a lofty castle. The hill seemed perpendicular from the darkness below it. It was a sight that I could call to mind at any time, it was so distinct.

"*Friday, 4th.*— . . William translating *The Prioress's Tale*. . . . I finished the letter to Coleridge, and we received a letter from him and Sara. . . . A letter of Lamb's about George Dyer with it.

"*Saturday, 5th.*— . . William finished *The Prioress's Tale*, and after tea Mary and he wrote it out. . . .

"*Sunday, 6th.*—A very fine beautiful sunshiny morning. William worked a while at Chaucer, then we set forward to walk into Easedale. . . . We walked backwards and forwards in the flat field, which makes the second course of Easedale, with that beautiful rock in the field beside us, and all the rocks and the woods and the mountains enclosing us round. The sun was shining among them, the snow thinly scattered upon the tops of the mountains. In the afternoon we sat by the fire: I read Chaucer aloud, and Mary read the first canto of *The Fairy Queen*. After tea Mary and I walked to Ambleside for letters. . . . It was a sober starlight evening. The stars not shining as it were with all their brightness when they were visible, and sometimes hiding themselves behind small greying clouds, that passed soberly along. We opened Coleridge's letter. . . . We thought we saw that he wrote in good spirits, so we came happily homewards, . . . but it was a sad melancholy letter, and prevented us all from sleeping.

"*Monday Morning, 7th.*—We rose by candlelight. A showery unpleasant morning, after a downright rainy night. We determined, however, to go to Keswick if possible, and

we set off* a little after nine o'clock. When we were upon the Raise it snowed very much; and the whole prospect closed in upon us, like a moorland valley, upon a moor very wild. But when we were at the top of the Raise we saw the mountains before us. The sun shone upon them, here and there; and Wytheburn vale, though wild, looked soft. The day went on cheerfully and pleasantly. Now and then a hail shower attacked us; but we kept up a good heart, for Mary is a famous jockey. . . . We reached Greta Hall at about one o'clock. Met Mrs Coleridge in the field. Derwent in the cradle asleep, . . . the image of his father. Hartley well. We wrote to Coleridge. . . . We parted from them at four o'clock. It was a little of the dusk when we set off. Cotton mills lighted up. The first star at Nadel Fell, but it was never dark. We rode very briskly. Snow upon the Raise. Reached home at seven o'clock. William at work with Chaucer, *The God of Love*. I wrote a letter to Coleridge.

"Tuesday, 8th December 1801. — A dullish, rainyish morning. William at work with Chaucer. I read Bruce's *Lochleven*. . . . William worked at the *Cuckoo and the Nightingale* till he was tired. . . .

"Wednesday Morning, 9th December. — . . . I read *Palemon and Arcite*. . . . William writing out his alteration of Chaucer's *Cuckoo and Nightingale*. . . . When I had finished a letter to C., . . . Mary and I walked into Easedale. . . . The river came galloping past the Church, as fast as it could come, and when we got into Easedale we saw Churn Milk Force, like a broad stream of snow at the little footbridge. We stopped to look at the company of rivers which came hurrying down the vale, this way and that. It was a valley of streams and islands, with that great waterfall at the head, and lesser falls in different parts of the mountains, coming down to these rivers. We could hear the sound of the

* On horseback apparently.

lesser falls, but we could not see them. We walked backwards and forwards till all distant objects, except the white shape of the waterfall and the lines of the mountains, were gone. We had the crescent moon when we went out, and at our return there were a few stars that shone dimly, but it was a grey cloudy night.

"*Thursday, 10th December.*— . . . We walked into Easedale to gather mosses, and then we went . . . up the Gill, beyond that little waterfall. It was a wild scene of crag and mountain. One craggy point rose above the rest irregular and rugged, and very impressive it was. . . .

"*Saturday, 12th.*— . . . Snow upon the ground. . . . All looked cheerful and bright. Helm Crag rose very bold and craggy, a Being by itself, and behind it was the large ridge of mountain, smooth as marble and snow white. All the mountains looked like solid stone, on our left, going from Grasmere, *i.e.*, White Moss and Nab Scar. The snow hid the grass, and all signs of vegetation, and the rocks showed themselves boldly everywhere, and seemed more lonely than rock or stone. The birches on the crags beautiful, red brown and glittering. The ashes glittering spears with their upright stems. The hills very beautiful, and so good!! and, dear Coleridge! I ate twenty for thee,* when I was by myself. . . . William went to look at Langdale Caves. We had a sweet invigorating walk. Mr Clarkson came in before tea. We played at cards. Sate up late. The moon shone upon the waters below Silver How, and above it hung (combining with Silver How on one side) a bowl-shaped moon, the curve downwards; the white fields; the glittering roof of Thomas Ashburner's house; the dark yew tree, the white fields, gay and beautiful. William lay with his curtains open that he might see it.

* Was S. T. C. fond of eating these?

"*Monday, 14th December.*—William and Mary walked to Ambleside in the morning to buy mouse traps. . . . I wrote to Coleridge a very long letter while they were absent. Sate by the fire in the evening reading.

"*Thursday, 17th.*—Snow in the night and still snowing. . . . Ambleside looked excessively beautiful as we came out—like a village in another country; and the light cheerful mountains were seen, in the long distance, as bright and as clear as at mid-day, with the blue sky above them. We heard waterfowl calling out by the lake side. Jupiter was very glorious above the Ambleside hills, and one large star hung over the corner of the hills on the opposite side of Rydal water.

"*Tuesday, 22nd.*— . . . William composed a few lines of *The Pedlar*. We talked about Lamb's tragedy as we went down the white moss. We stopped a long time in going to watch a little bird with a salmon-coloured breast, a white cross or T upon its wings, and a brownish back with faint stripes. . . . It began to pick upon the road at the distance of four yards from us, and advanced nearer and nearer till it came within the length of William's stick without any apparent fear of us. . . . We overtook old Fleming at Rydal, leading his little Dutchman-like grandchild along the slippery road. The same face seemed to be natural to them both—the old man and the little child—and they went hand in hand, the grandfather cautious, yet looking proud of his charge. He had two patches of new cloth at the shoulder-blades of his faded claret-coloured coat, like eyes at each shoulder, not worn elsewhere. I found Mary at home in her riding-habit, all her clothes being put up. We were very sad about Coleridge. . . . We sate snugly

round the fire. I read to them the Tale of Custance and the Syrian monarch in the *Man of Law's Tale*, also some of the *Prologue*. . . .

"Wednesday, 23rd.—. . . Mary wrote out the Tales from Chaucer for Coleridge. William worked at *The Ruined Cottage* and made himself very ill. . . .

"Saturday, 26th.—. . . Grasmere lake a beautiful image of stillness, clear as glass, reflecting all things. The wind was up, and the waters sounding. The lake of a rich purple, the fields a soft yellow, the island yellowish-green, the copses red-brown, the mountains purple, the church and buildings, how quiet they were! Poor Coleridge, Sara, and dear little Derwent here last year at this time. After tea we sate by the fire comfortably. I read aloud *The Miller's Tale*. Wrote to Coleridge. . . . William wrote part of the poem to Coleridge.*

"Sunday, 27th.—. . . William went to take in his boat. Sate in John's Grove a little while. . . . Mary wrote some lines of the third part of the poem which William brought and read to us when we came home.† . . .

"Monday, 28th of December.—William, Mary, and I set off on foot to Keswick. . . . The sun shone, but it was coldish. We parted from William upon the Raise. He joined us opposite Sara's rock. He was busy in composition and sate down upon the wall. . . . Once he left his penser, and Mary turned back for it, and found it. . . . We reached Greta Hall at about half-past five o'clock. . . .

"Tuesday, 29th.—. . . Wilkinson went with us to the top of the hill. We turned out of the road at the second mile stone, and passed a pretty cluster of houses at the foot of St John's Vale. The houses were among tall trees, mostly of Scotch fir, and some naked forest trees. We crossed a bridge just below these houses, and the river

* See vol. ii., pp. 305-308.

† Was this *Peter Bell*?

winded sweetly along the meadows. Our road soon led us along the sides of dreary bare hills, but we had a glorious prospect to the left of Saddleback, half way covered with snow, and underneath the comfortable white houses and the village of Threlkeld. These houses and the village want trees about them. Skiddaw was behind us, and dear Coleridge's desert home. As we ascended the hills it grew very cold and slippery. Luckily, the wind was at our backs, and helped us on. A sharp hail shower gathered at the head of Martindale, and the view upwards was very grand—wild cottages, seen through the hurrying hail shower. The wind drove and eddied about and about, and the hills looked large and swelling through the storm. We thought of Coleridge. O! the bonny nooks and windings and curlings of the beck down at the bottom of the steep, green mossy banks. . . .

"On Sunday the 19th January we went to meet Mary. It was a mild gentle thaw. She stayed with us till Friday, 24th. . . . On Thursday we dined at Mr Myers's, and on Friday, 24th, we parted from Mary. Before our parting we sate under a wall in the sun near a cottage above Stainton Bridge. The field in which we sate sloped downwards to a nearly level meadow, round which the Emont flowed in a small half-circle as at Lochleven. The opposite bank is woody, steep as a wall, but not high, and above that bank the fields slope gently, and irregularly down to it. These fields are surrounded by tall hedges, with trees among them, and there are clumps or grovelets of tall trees here and there. Sheep and cattle were in the fields. Dear Mary! there we parted from her. I daresay as often as she passes that road she will turn in at the gate to look at this sweet prospect. There was a barn and I think two or three cottages to be seen among the trees, and slips of lawn and irregular fields. . . . We dined at Thomas Wilkinson's

on Friday the 17th, and walked to Penrith for Mary. The trees were covered with hoar-frost—grasses, and trees, and hedges beautiful; a glorious sunset; frost keener than ever. . . . Mrs Clarkson amused us with many stories of her family and of persons whom she had known. I wish I had set them down as I heard them, when they were fresh in my memory. . . . Mrs Clarkson knew a clergyman and his wife who brought up ten children upon a curacy, sent two sons to college, and he left £1000 when he died. The wife was very generous, gave food and drink to all poor people. She had a passion for feeding animals. She killed a pig with feeding it over much. When it was dead she said, 'To be sure it's a great loss, but I thank God it did not die *clemmed*' (the Cheshire word for starved). Her husband was very fond of playing backgammon, and used to play whenever he could get anybody to play with him. She had played much in her youth, and was an excellent player; but her husband knew nothing of this, till one day she said to him, 'You're fond of backgammon, come play with me.' He was surprised. She told him she had kept it to herself, while she had a young family to attend to, but that now she would play with him! So they began to play, and played every night. . . .

"On Saturday, January 23rd, we left Eusemere at ten o'clock in the morning, I behind William. Mr Clarkson on his Galloway. The morning not very promising, the wind cold. The mountains large and dark, but only thinly streaked with snow. . . . We dined in Grisdale. . . . We struggled with the wind, and often rested as we went along. A hail shower met us before we reached the Tarn, and the way often was difficult over the snow; but at the Tarn the view closed in. We saw nothing but mists and snow; and at first the ice on the Tarn below us cracked and split, yet without water, a dull grey white. We lost our path, and

could see the Tarn no longer. We made our way out with difficulty, guided by a heap of stones which we well remembered. We were afraid of being bewildered in the mists, till the darkness should overtake us. We were long before we knew that we were in the right track, but thanks to William's skill we knew it long before we could see our way before us. There was no footmark upon the snow either of man or beast. We saw four sheep before we had left the snow region. The vale of Grasmere, when the mists broke away, looked soft and grave, of a yellow hue. It was dark before we reached home. . . . Sitting by our own fire, . . . we talked about the Lake of Como, read the description, looked about us, and felt that we were happy. . . .

"*Sunday, 24th.*—We went into the orchard as soon as breakfast was over. Laid out the situation for our new room, and sauntered a while. . . . I wrote to Coleridge. . . .

"*Monday, 25th January.*— . . . William tired with composition. . . .

"*Tuesday, 26th.*— . . . We are going to walk, and I am ready and waiting by the kitchen fire for William. We set forward intending to go into Easedale, but the wind being loudish, and blowing down Easedale, we walked under Silver How for a shelter. We went a little beyond the syke; then up to John's Grove, where the storm of Thursday has made sad ravages. Two of the finest trees are uprooted, one lying with the turf about its root, as if the whole together had been pared by a knife. The other is a larch. Several others are blown aside, one is snapped in two. . . . William had tired himself with working. . . . We received a letter from Mary with an account of Coleridge's arrival in London. . . . I wrote to Mary before bedtime. . . . William wrote out part of his poem, and endeavoured to alter it, and so made himself ill. I copied out the rest for him. . . .

"*Wednesday, 27th.*—A beautiful mild morning; the sun

shone; lake was still, and all the shores reflected in it. I finished my letter to Mary. William wrote to Stuart. I copied sonnets for him. . . . William wasted his mind in the magazines. I wrote to Coleridge and Mrs C. . . . Then we sate by the fire, and were happy, only our tender thoughts became painful. . . .

"*Thursday, 28th.*— . . . William wrote an epitaph, and altered one that he wrote when he was a boy. . . .

"*Friday, 29th January.*— . . . I read the first Book of *Paradise Lost*. After dinner we walked to Ambleside. . . . A heart-rending letter from Coleridge. We were sad as we could be. William wrote to him. We talked about William's going to London. It was a mild afternoon. There was an unusual softness in the prospects as we went, a rich yellow upon the fields, and a soft grave purple on the waters. When we returned many stars were out, the clouds were moveless, and the sky soft purple, the lake of Rydal calm, Jupiter behind. Jupiter at least *we* call him, but William says we always call the largest star Jupiter. When we came home we both wrote to C. I was stupefied.

"*Saturday, January 30th.* — A cold dark morning. William chopped wood. I brought it in a basket. . . . He asked me to set down the story of Barbara Wilkinson's turtle dove. Barbara is an old maid. She had two turtle doves. One of them died, the first year I think. The other continued to live alone in its cage for nine years, but for one whole year it had a companion and daily visitor—a little mouse, that used to come and feed with it; and the dove would carry it and cover over it with its wings, and make a loving noise to it. The mouse, though it did not testify equal delight in the dove's company, was yet at perfect ease. The poor mouse disappeared, and the dove was left solitary till its death. It died of a short sickness, and was buried under a tree, with funeral ceremony by

Barbara and her maidens, and one or two others. On Saturday, 30th, William worked at *The Pedlar* all the morning. He kept the dinner waiting till four o'clock. He was much tired. . . .

"*Sunday, 31st.*— . . . We walked round the two lakes. Grasmere was very soft, and Rydal was extremely beautiful from the western side. Nab Scar was just topped by a cloud which, cutting it off as high as it could be cut off, made the mountain look uncommonly lofty.* We sate down a long time in different places. I always love to walk that way, because it is the way I first came to Rydal and Grasmere, and because our dear Coleridge did also. When I came with William, six and a half years ago, it was just at sunset. There was a rich yellow light on the waters, and the islands were reflected there. To-day it was grave and soft, but not perfectly calm. William says it was much such a day as when Coleridge came with *him*. The sun shone out before we reached Grasmere. We sate by the roadside at the foot of the lake, close to Mary's dear name which she had cut herself upon the stone. William cut at it with his knife to make it plainer.† We amused ourselves for a long time in watching the breezes, some as if they came from the bottom of the lake, spread in a circle, brushing along the surface of the water, and growing more delicate as it were thinner, and of a *paler* colour till they died away. Others spread out like a peacock's tail, and some went right forward this way and that in all directions. The lake was still where these breezes were not, but they made it all alive. I found a strawberry blossom in a rock. The little slender flower had more courage than the green leaves, for *they* were but half expanded and half grown, but the blossom was

* Compare the poem *To the Clouds*, vol. viii., p. 130, and the Fenwick note to that poem.

† This still exists, and is known to a few.

spread full out. I uprooted it rashly, and I felt as if I had been committing an outrage, so I planted it again. It will have but a stormy life of it, but let it live if it can. We found Calvert here. I brought a handkerchief full of mosses, which I placed on the chimneypiece when Calvert was gone. He dined with us, and carried away the encyclopædias. After they were gone, I spent some time in trying to reconcile myself to the change, and in rummaging out and arranging some other books in their places. One good thing is this—there is a nice elbow place for William, and he may sit for the picture of John Bunyan any day. . . . We payed our rent to Benson. . . .

"Monday, February 1st.—. . . William worked hard at *The Pedlar*, and tired himself. . . . There was a purplish light upon Mr Oliff's house, which made me look to the other side of the vale, when I saw a strange stormy mist coming down the side of Silver How of a reddish purple colour. It soon came on a heavy rain. . . .

"Tuesday, 2nd February.—. . . William went into the orchard after breakfast to chop wood. . . . Walked backwards and forwards between Goody Bridge and Butterlip How. William wished to break off composition, but was unable, and so did himself harm. The sun shone, but it was cold. William worked at *The Pedlar*. After tea I read aloud the eleventh book of *Paradise Lost*. We were much impressed, and also melted into tears. The papers came in soon after I had laid aside the book—a good thing for William. . . .

"Saturday, 6th February.—. . . Two very affecting letters from Coleridge; resolved to try another climate. I was stopped in my writing, and made ill by the letters. . . . Wrote again after tea, and translated two or three of Lessing's *Fables*.

"Sunday, 7th.—. . . William . . . working at his poem.

We sate by the fire, and did not walk, but read *The Pedlar*, thinking it done; but W. could find fault with one part of it. It was uninteresting, and must be altered. Poor William!

"*Monday Morning, 8th February 1802.*— . . . Before we had come to the shore of the lake, we met our patient bowbent friend, with his little wooden box at his back. 'Where are you going,' said he. 'To Rydal for letters.' 'I have two for you in my box.' We lifted up the lid, and there they lay. Poor fellow, he straddled and pushed on with all his might; but we outstripped him far away when we had turned back with our letters. . . . I could not help comparing lots with him. He goes at that slow pace every morning, and after having wrought a hard day's work returns at night, however weary he may be, takes it all quietly, and, though perhaps he neither feels thankfulness nor pleasure, when he eats his supper, and has nothing to look forward to but falling asleep in bed, yet I daresay he neither murmurs nor thinks it hard. He seems mechanised to labour. We broke the seal of Coleridge's letters, and I had light enough just to see that he was not ill. . . . At the top of the white moss, . . . the sight was wild. There was a strange mountain lightness. . . . I have often observed it there in the evenings, being between the two valleys. There is more of the sky there than any other place. It has a strange effect. Sometimes along with the obscurity of evening or night it seems almost like a peculiar sort of light. There was not much wind till we came to John's Grove, then it roared right out of the grove, all the trees were tossing about. Coleridge's letter somewhat damped us. It spoke with less confidence about France. William wrote to him. . . .

"*Wednesday, 10th.*—A very snowy morning. . . . I was writing out the poem, as we hope, for a final writing.

. . . We read the first part and were delighted with it, but William afterwards got to some ugly place, and went to bed tired out. A wild, moonlight night.

"*Thursday, 11th.*— . . . William sadly tired and working at *The Pedlar* . . . I read to W. the life of Ben Jonson and some short poems of his, which were too interesting for him, and would not let him go to sleep. I had begun with Fletcher, but he was too dull for me. Fuller says, in his *Life of Jonson* (speaking of his plays), 'If his latter be not so spritful and vigorous as his first pieces, all that are old, and all who desire to be old, should excuse him therein.' He says he 'beheld' wit-combats between Shakespeare and Jonson, and compares Shakespeare to an English man-of-war, Jonson to a great Spanish galleon. There is one affecting line in Jonson's epitaph on his first daughter—

" 'Here lies to each her parents ruth,
Mary the daughter of their youth.
At six months' end she parted hence,
In safety of her innocence.'

"*Friday, 12th.*—A very fine, bright, clear, hard frost. William working again. I recopied *The Pedlar*, but poor William all the time at work. . . . In the afternoon a poor woman came to beg, . . . but she has been used to go a-begging, for she has often come here. Her father lived to the age of 105. She is a woman of strong bones, with a complexion that has been beautiful, and remained very fresh last year, but now she looks broken, and her little boy—a pretty little fellow, and whom I have loved for the sake of Basil—looks thin and pale. I observed this to her. 'Aye,' says she, 'we have all been ill. Our house was nearly unroofed in the storm, and we lived in it so for more than a week.' The child wears a ragged drab coat and a fur cap. Poor little fellow, I think he seems scarcely at all

grown since the first time I saw him. William was with me when we met him in a lane going to Skelwith Bridge. He looked very pretty. He was walking lazily, in the deep narrow lane, overshadowed with the hedgerows, his meal poke hung over his shoulder. He said he was going to be a laiting. Poor creature! He now wears the same coat he had on at that time. When the woman was gone, I could not help thinking that we are not half thankful enough that we are placed in that condition of life in which we are, . . . as we wish for this £50, that £100, &c., &c. We have not, however, to reproach ourselves with ever breathing a murmur. This woman's was but a common case. The snow still lies upon the ground. Just at the closing in of the day, I heard a cart pass the door, and at the same time the dismal sound of a crying infant. I went to the window and had light enough to see that a man was driving a cart which seemed not to be very full, and that a woman with an infant in her arms was following close behind and as close to her. It was a wild and melancholy sight. . . . After the candles were lighted, we sat a long time with the window unclosed, and almost finished writing *The Pedlar*; but poor William wore out himself and me out with labour. We had an affecting conversation. Went to bed at twelve o'clock.

"*Saturday, 13th.*—It snowed a little this morning. Still at work at *The Pedlar*, altering and refitting. . . . William read parts of his *Recluse* aloud to me. . . .

"*Sunday, 14th February.*—A fine morning. The sun shines out, but it has been a hard frost in the night. There are some little snowdrops that are afraid to put their white heads quite out, and a few blossoms of hepatica that are half-starved. William left me at work altering some passages of *The Pedlar*, and went into the orchard. The fine day pushed him on to resolve, and as soon as I had read a letter to him, which I had just received from

Clarkson, he said he would go to Penrith, so Molly was despatched for the horse. I worked hard, got the writing finished, and all quite trim. I wrote to Mrs Clarkson, and put up some letters for Mary H., and off he went. . . . I then sate over the fire, reading Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*, and other things. Before sunset, I put on my shawl and walked out. The snow-covered mountains were spotted with rich sunlight, a palish-buffish colour. . . . I stood at the wishing-gate, and when I came in view of Rydal, I cast a long look upon the mountains beyond. . . . After dinner, a little before sunset, I walked out about twenty yards above Glow-worm Rock. I met a carman, a Highlander, I suppose, with four carts, the first three belonging to himself, the last evidently to a man and his family who had joined company with him, and who I guessed to be potters. The carman was cheering his horses, and talking to a little lass about ten years of age who seemed to make him her companion. She ran to the wall and took up a large stone to support the wheel of one of his carts, and ran on before with it in her arms to be ready for him. She was a beautiful creature, and there was something uncommonly impressive in the lightness and joyousness of her manner. Her business seemed to be all pleasure—pleasure in her own motions, and the man looked at her as if he too was pleased, and spoke to her in the same tone in which he spoke to his horses. There was a wildness in her whole figure, not the wildness of a mountain lass, but of the road lass, a traveller from her birth, who had wanted neither food nor clothes. Her mother followed the last cart with a lovely child, perhaps about a year old, at her back, and a good-looking girl, about fifteen years old, walked beside her. All the children were like the mother. She had a very fresh complexion, but she was blown with fagging up the steep hill and with what she carried. Her husband was helping the

horse to drag the cart up by pushing it with his shoulder. . . . I wrote to Coleridge. Went to bed at about twelve o'clock. . . . I slept badly, for my thoughts were full of William.

"*Tuesday, 16th.*— . . Mr Graham said he wished William had been with him the other day; he was riding in a post-chaise, and he heard a strange cry that he could not understand; the sound continued, and he called to the chaise driver to stop. It was a little girl that was crying as if her heart would burst. She had got up behind the chaise, and her cloak had been caught by the wheel and was jammed in and it hung there. She was crying after it, poor thing. Mr Graham took her into the chaise, and her cloak was released from the wheel, but the child's misery did not cease, for her cloak was torn to rags; it had been a miserable cloak before, but she had no other, and it was the greatest sorrow that could befall her. Her name was Alice Fell.* She had no parents, and belonged to the next town. At the next town Mr G. left money with some respectable people in the town, to buy her a new cloak.

"*Wednesday, 17th.*— . . I copied the second part of *Peter Bell*. . . .

"*Thursday, 18th.*— . . I copied new part of *Peter Bell* in W.'s absence, and began a letter to Coleridge. William came in with a letter from Coleridge. . . . We talked together till eleven o'clock, when William got to work and was no worse for it. Hard frost.

"*Saturday, 20th.*— . . I wrote the first part of *Peter Bell*. . . .

"*Sunday, 21st.*—A very wet morning. I wrote the second prologue to *Peter Bell*. . . . After dinner I wrote

* See vol. ii., p. 243-247.

the first prologue. . . . Snowdrops quite out, but cold and winterly; yet, for all this, a thrush that lives in our orchard has shouted and sung its merriest all day long. . . .

"*Monday, 22nd.*— . . . In the evening we walked to the top of the hill, then to the bridge. We hung over the wall, and looked at the deep stream below it come with a full, steady, yet a very rapid, flow down to the lake. The sykes made a sweet sound everywhere, and looked very interesting in the twilight, and that little one above Mr Oliff's house was very impressive, a ghostly white serpent line—it made a sound most distinctly heard of itself. . . .

"*Tuesday, 23rd.*— . . . When we came out of our own doors, that dear thrush was singing upon the topmost of the smooth branches of the ash tree at the top of the orchard. How long it had been perched on that same tree I cannot tell, but we had heard its dear voice in the orchard the day through, along with a cheerful undersong made by our winter friends, the robins. As we came home, I picked up a few mosses by the roadside, which I left at home. We then went to John's Grove. There we sate a little while looking at the fading landscape. The lake, though the objects on the shore were fading, seemed brighter than when it is perfect day, and the island pushed itself upwards, distinct and large. All the shores marked. There was a sweet, sea-like sound in the trees above our heads. We walked backwards and forwards some time for dear John's sake, then walked to look at Rydal. . . .

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 " *Friday, 26th.*— . . . William always gets on better with conversation at home than elsewhere. . . .

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 " *Tuesday.*— . . . We walked on Butterlip How under the wind. It rained all the while. . . . The mountains of Easedale, black and covered with snow at the tops, gave a

peculiar softness to the valley. The clouds hid the tops of some of them. The valley was populous, and enlivened with streams. . . .

"*Wednesday*.—I was so unlucky as to propose to re-write *The Pedlar*. William got to work, and was worn to death. . . .

"*Friday*.—Read L. B. Blessings on that brother of mine. Beautiful new moon over Silver How.

"*Sunday Morning*.—A very fine, clear frost. I stitched up *The Pedlar*; wrote out *Ruth*; read it with the alterations, then wrote Mary H. Read a little German, . . . and in came William. . . . He brought two new stanzas of *Ruth*. . . .

"*Monday Morning*.—A soft rain and mist. We walked to Rydal for letters. The vale looked very beautiful in excessive simplicity, yet, at the same time, in uncommon obscurity. The church stood alone—mountains behind. The meadows looked calm and rich, bordering on the still lake. Nothing else to be seen but lake and island. . . .

"On Friday evening the moon hung over the northern side of the highest point of Silver How, like a gold ring snapped in two, and shaven off at the ends. Within this ring lay the circle of the round moon, as distinctly to be seen as ever the enlightened moon is. William had observed the same appearance at Keswick, . . . hanging over the Newland Fells. . . .

"*Tuesday Morning*.—William was reading in Ben Jonson. He read me a beautiful poem on love. . . . We sate by the fires in the evening, and read *The Pedlar* over. William worked a little, and altered it in a few places. . . .

"*Wednesday*.— . . . William read in Ben Jonson in the morning. I read a little German. . . . William has since tea

been talking about publishing the Yorkshire Wolds poem with *The Pedlar*.

"*Thursday*.—A fine morning. William worked at the poem of *The Singing Bird*.* Just as we were sitting down to dinner we heard Mr Clarkson's voice. I ran down, William followed. He was so finely mounted that William was more intent upon the horse than the rider, an offence easily forgiven, for Mr Clarkson was as proud of it himself as he well could be. . . .

"*Friday*.— . . The sun shone while it rained, and the stones of the walls and the pebbles on the road glittered like silver. . . . William finished his poem of *The Singing Bird*. In the meantime I read the remainder of Lessing. In the evening after tea William wrote *Alice Fell*. He went to bed tired, with a wakeful mind and a weary body. . . .

"*Saturday Morning*.—It was as cold as ever it has been all winter, very hard frost. . . . William finished *Alice Fell*, and then wrote the poem of *The Beggar Woman*, taken from a woman whom I had seen in May (now nearly two years ago) when John and he were at Gallow Hill. I sate with him at intervals all the morning, took down his stanzas, &c. . . . After tea I read to William that account of the little boy belonging to the tall woman, and an unlucky thing it was, for he could not escape from those very words, and so he could not write the poem. He left it unfinished, and went tired to bed. In our walk from Rydal he had got warmed with the subject, and had half cast the poem.

"*Sunday Morning*.—William . . . got up at nine o'clock, but before he rose he had finished *The Beggar Boy*, and while we were at breakfast . . . he wrote the poem *To a Butterfly!* He ate not a morsel, but sate with his shirt neck unbuttoned, and his waistcoat open while he did it. The thought first came upon him as we were talking about

* First published in 1807 under the title of *The Sailor's Mother*.

the pleasure we both always felt at the sight of a butterfly. I told him that I used to chase them a little, but that I was afraid of brushing the dust off their wings, and did not catch them. He told me how he used to kill all the white ones when he went to school because they were Frenchmen. . . . I wrote it down and the other poems, and I read them all over to him. . . . William began to try to alter *The Butterfly*, and tired himself. . . .

"*Monday Morning*.—We sate reading the poems, and I read a little German. . . .

"*Tuesday*.— . . . William went up into the orchard, . . . and wrote a part of *The Emigrant Mother*. After dinner I read him to sleep. I read Spenser. . . . The moon was a good height above the mountains. She seemed far distant in the sky. There were two stars beside her, that twinkled in and out, and seemed almost like butterflies in motion and lightness. They looked to be far nearer to us than the moon.

"*Wednesday*.—William went up into the orchard and finished the poem. . . . A sweet evening as it had been a sweet day, and I walked quietly along the side of Rydal lake with quiet thoughts—the hills and the lake were still—the owls had not begun to hoot, and the little birds had given over singing. I looked before me and saw a red light upon Silver How as if coming out of the vale below,

"There was a light of most strange birth,
A light that came out of the earth,
And spread along the dark hill-side."

Thus I was going on when I saw the shape of my beloved in the road at a little distance. We turned back to see the light but it was fading—almost gone. The owls hooted when we sate on the wall at the foot of White Moss; the sky broke more and more, and we saw the moon now and then. John Gill passed us with his cart; we sate on. When we

came in sight of our own dear Grasmere, the vale looked fair and quiet in the moonshine, the Church was there and all the cottages. There were huge slow-travelling clouds in the sky, that threw large masses of shade upon some of the mountains. We walked backwards and forwards, between home and Olliff's, till I was tired. William kindled, and began to write the poem. We carried cloaks into the orchard, and sate a while there. I left him, and he nearly finished the poem. I was tired to death, and went to bed before him. He came down to me, and read the poem to me in bed. . . . Rydal vale was full of life and motion. The wind blew briskly, and the lake was covered all over with bright silver waves, that were there each the twinkling of an eye, then others rose up and took their place as fast as they went away. The rocks glittered in the sunshine. The crows and the ravens were busy, and the thrushes and little birds sang. I went through the fields, and sate for an hour. . . . As we came along Ambleside vale in the twilight, it was a grave evening. There was something in the air that compelled me to various thoughts—the hills were large, closed in by the sky. . . . Night was come on, and the moon was overcast. But as I climbed the moss, the moon came out from behind a mountain mass of black clouds. O, the unutterable darkness of the sky, and the earth below the moon, and the glorious brightness of the moon itself! There was a vivid sparkling streak of light at this end of Rydal water, but the rest was very dark, and Loughrigg Fell and Silver How were white and bright, as if they were covered with hoar frost. The moon retired again, and appeared and disappeared several times before I reached home. Once there was no moonlight to be seen, but upon the island-house and the promontory of the island where it stands. 'That needs must be a holy place,' &c., &c. I had many very exquisite feelings, and when I saw this lowly building in the waters,

among the dark and lofty hills, with that bright, soft light upon it, it made me more than half a poet. When I reached home, . . . I tried to write verses. . . .

"*Friday*.—A very rainy morning. I went up into the lane to collect a few green mosses to make the chimney gay against my darling's return. Poor Coleridge, I did not wish for, or expect him, it rained so. . . . Coleridge came in. His eyes were a little swollen with the wind. I was much affected by the sight of him, he seemed half-stupefied. William came in soon after. Coleridge went to bed late, and William and I sate up till four o'clock. A letter from Sara sent by Mary. They disputed about Ben Jonson. My spirits were agitated very much.

"*Saturday*.— . . When I awoke the whole vale was covered with snow. William and Coleridge walked. . . . We had a little talk about going abroad. After tea William read *The Pedlar*. Talked about various things—christening the children, &c., &c.

"*Tuesday*.—A mild morning. William worked at *The Cuckoo* poem. I sewed beside him. . . . I read German, and, at the closing-in of day, went to sit in the orchard. William came to me, and walked backwards and forwards. We talked about Coleridge. Wm. repeated the poem to me. I left him there, and in twenty minutes he came in, rather tired with attempting to write. He is now reading Ben Jonson. I am going to read German. . . .

"*Wednesday*.—I made a vow that we would not leave this country for Gallow Hill. . . . William altered *The Butterfly* as we came from Rydal. . . .

"*Friday*.— . . William . . . worked at *The Cuckoo*. . . . After dinner I sate two hours in the orchard. William . . . trying, without success, to alter a passage in his *Silver*

How poem. He had written a conclusion just before he went out. While I was getting into bed, he wrote *The Rainbow*.

"*Saturday*.—A divine morning. At breakfast William wrote part of an ode. . . . We sate all day in the orchard.

"*Sunday*.—We went to Keswick. Arrived wet to the skin. . . .

"*Wednesday, 31st March*.— . . . We walked to Portinscale, lay upon the turf, and looked into the Vale of Newlands; up to Borrowdale, and down to Keswick—a soft Venetian view. Calvert and Wilkinsons dined with us.

"*Saturday, 3rd*.—William went on to Skiddaw with Coleridge. We dined at Calvert's. . . .

"*Sunday, 4th*.—We drove by gig to Water End. I walked down to Coleridge's. Mrs Calvert came to Greta Bank to tea. William walked down with Mrs Calvert, and repeated his verses to them. . . .

"*Monday, 5th*.—We came to Euesmere. Coleridge walked with us to Threlkeld. . . .

"*Monday, 12th*.— . . . The ground covered with snow. I walked to T. Wilkinson's and sent for letters. The woman brought me one from William and Mary. It was a sharp, windy night. Thomas Wilkinson came with me to Barton, and questioned me like a catechiser all the way. Every question was like the snapping of a little thread about my heart. I was so full of thought of my half-read letter and other things. I was glad when he left me. Then I had time to look at the moon while I was thinking my own thoughts. The moon travelled through the clouds, tinging them yellow as she passed along, with two stars near her,

one larger than the other. These stars grew and diminished as they passed from, or went into, the clouds. At this time William, as I found the next day, was riding by himself between Middleham and Barnard Castle. . . .

"*Thursday, April 15th, 1802.*—It was a threatening misty morning, but mild. We set off after dinner from Eusemere. Mrs Clarkson went a short way with us, but turned back. The wind was furious, and we thought we must have returned. We first rested in the large boat-house, then under a furze bush opposite Mr Clarkson's. Saw the plough going in the field. The wind seized our breath. The lake was rough. There was a boat by itself floating in the middle of the bay below Water Millock. We rested again in the Water Millock Lane. The hawthorns are black and green, the birches here and there greenish, but there is yet more of purple to be seen on the twigs. We got over into a field to avoid some cows—people working. A few primroses by the roadside—woodsorrel flower, the anemone, scentless violets, strawberries, and that starry, yellow flower which Mrs C. calls pile wort. When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the water-side. We fancied that the sea had floated the seeds ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about and above them; some rested their heads upon these stones, as on a pillow, for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, that blew upon them over the lake; they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing. This wind

flowed directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot, and a few stragglers higher up; but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway. We rested again and again. The bays were stormy, and we heard the waves at different distances, and in the middle of the water, like the sea. . . .

"*Friday, 16th April (Good Friday).*—When I undrew curtains in the morning, I was much affected by the beauty of the prospect, and the change. The sun shone, the wind had passed away, the hills looked cheerful, the river was very bright as it flowed into the lake. The church rises up behind a little knot of rocks, the steeple not so high as an ordinary three-story house. . . . The valley is at first broken by little woody knolls that make retiring places, fairy valleys in the vale, the river winds along under these hills, travelling, not in a bustle but not slowly, to the lake. We saw a fisherman in the flat meadow on the other side of the water. He came towards us, and threw his line over the two-arched bridge. It is a bridge of a heavy construction, almost bending inwards in the middle, but it is grey, and there is a look of ancience in the architecture of it that pleased me. As we go on the vale opens out more into one vale, with somewhat of a cradle bed. Cottages, with groups of trees, on the side of the hills. We passed a pair of twin children, two years old. Sate on the next bridge which we crossed—a single arch. We rested again upon the turf, and looked at the same bridge. We observed arches in the water, occasioned by the large stones sending down in two streams. A sheep came plunging through the river, stumbled up the bank, and passed close to us. It had been frightened by an insignificant little dog on the other side. Its fleece dropped a glittering shower under its belly. Primroses by the road-side, pile wort that shone

like stars of gold in the sun, violets, strawberries, retired and half-buried among the grass. When we came to the foot of Brothers Water, I left William sitting on the bridge, and went along the path on the right side of the lake through the wood. I was delighted with what I saw. The water under the boughs of the bare old trees, the simplicity of the mountains, and the exquisite beauty of the path. There was one grey cottage. I repeated *The Glow-worm*, as I walked along. I hung over the gate, and thought I could have stayed for ever. When I returned, I found William writing a poem descriptive of the sights and sounds we saw and heard.* There was the gentle flowing of the stream, the glittering, lively lake, green fields without a living creature to be seen on them; behind us, a flat pasture with forty-two cattle feeding; to our left, the road leading to the hamlet. No smoke there, the sun shone on the bare roofs. The people were at work ploughing, harrowing, and sowing; . . . a dog barking now and then, cocks crowing, birds twittering, the snow in patches at the top of the highest hills, yellow palms, purple and green twigs on the birches, ashes with their glittering spikes, stems quite bare. The hawthorn a bright green, with black stems under the oak. The moss of the oak glossy. We went on. . . . William finished his poem before we got to the foot of Kirkstone.* There were hundreds of cattle in the vale. . . . The walk up Kirkstone was very interesting. The beck among the rocks were all alive. William showed me the little mossy streamlet which he had before loved when he saw its bright green track in the snow. The view above Ambleside very beautiful. There we sat and looked down on the green vale. We watched the crows at a little distance from us become white as silver as they flew in the sunshine, and when they went still further, they looked like

* "The cock is crowing," &c., see vol. ii., p. 262.

shapes of water passing over the green fields. The whitening of Ambleside church is a great deduction from the beauty of it, seen from this point. . . . The garden looked pretty in the half-moonlight, half-daylight, as we went up the vale. . . .

"Saturday, 17th.—. . . We sate in the garden all the morning. William dug a little. I transplanted a honeysuckle. The lake was still. The sheep on the island, reflected in the water, like the grey-deer we saw in Gowbarrow. . . . I saw a robin chasing a scarlet butterfly this morning.

"Sunday, 18th.—. . . We sate in the orchard. William wrote the poem on *The Robin and the Butterfly*.* . . . William met me at Rydal . . . with the conclusion of the poem of the Robin. . . . We left out some lines.

"Tuesday, 20th.—. . . William wrote a conclusion † to the poem of the 'Butterfly':—

'I've watched you now a full half-hour.'

. . . We sate in the orchard and repeated *The Glow-worm* and other poems. Just when William came to a well or trough, which there is in Lord Darlington's park, he began to write that poem of *The Glow-worm*; . . . interrupted in going through the town of Staindrop, finished it about two miles and a half beyond Staindrop. He did not feel the jogging of the horse while he was writing; but, when he had done, he felt the effect of it, and his fingers were cold with his gloves. His horse fell with him on the other side of St Helens, Auckland. So much for *The Glow-worm*. It was written coming from Middleham on Monday, April 12, 1802. . . .

* See vol. ii., p. 264.

† Published as a separate poem.

" *Wednesday, 21st.*—William and I sauntered a little in the garden. Coleridge came to us, and repeated the verses he wrote to Sara. I was affected by them. . . . The sun shone, the green fields, and the fair sky made me sadder; even the little happy, sporting lambs seemed but sorrowful to me. The pile wort spread out on the grass a thousand shining stars? The primroses were there, and the remains of a field of daffodils. The well, which we cleaned out last night, is still but a little muddy pond, though full of water. . . . Read Coleridge's life and a poem or two. . . .

" *Thursday 22nd.*— . . . We walked into Easedale. The sun shone. Coleridge talked of his plan of sowing a laburnum in the woods. The waters were high, for there had been a great quantity of rain in the night. I sat under the shade of a holly tree that grows upon a rock, and looked down the stream. I then went to the single house behind that single rock in the field, and sat upon the grass till they came from the waterfall. I saw them there, and heard William flinging stones into the river, whose roar was loud even where I was. When they returned, William was repeating the poem:—

‘I have thoughts that are fed by the sun.’

It had been called to his mind by the dying away of the stunning of the waterfall when he got behind a stone. . . .

" *Friday 23rd April 1802.*— . . . We determined to walk under Nab Scar. . . . The sun shone, and we were lazy. Coleridge pitched upon several places to sit down, but we could not be all of one mind respecting sun and shade, so we pushed on to the foot of the Scar. It was very grand when we looked up, very stormy, here and there a budding tree. William observed that the umbrella yew tree, that breasts the waterfall, had lost its character as a tree, and had become somewhat

like to solid wood. Coleridge and I pushed on before. We left William sitting on the stones, feasting with silence; and C. and I sat down upon a rocky seat—a couch it might be under the bower of William's eglantine, Andrew's Broom. He was below us, and we could see him. He came to us, and repeated his poems * while we sate beside him upon the ground. He had made himself a seat in the crumbling ground. Afterwards we lingered long, looking into the vales; Ambleside vale, with the copses, the village under the hill, and the green fields; Rydal, with a lake all alive and glittering, yet but little stirred by breezes; and our dear Grasmere, making a little round lake of nature's own, with never a house, never a green field, but the copses and the bare hills enclosing it, and the river flowing out of it. Above rose the Coniston Fells, in their own shape and colour—not man's hills, but all for themselves, the sky and the clouds, and a few wild creatures. C. went to search for something new. We saw him climbing up towards a rock. He called us, and we found him in a bower—the sweetest that was ever seen. The rock on one side is very high, and all covered with ivy, which hung loosely about, and bore bunches of brown berries. On the other side it was higher than my head. We looked down on the Ambleside vale, that seemed to wind away from us, the village lying under the hill. The fir-tree island was reflected beautifully. About this bower there is mountain-ash, common-ash, yew-tree, ivy, holly, hawthorn, grasses, and flowers, and a carpet of moss. Above, at the top of the rock, there is another spot. It is scarce a bower, a little parlour only, not enclosed by walls, but shaped out for a vestry-place by the rocks, and the ground rising about it. It had a sweet moss carpet. We resolved to go and

* See the poems *The Waterfall and the Eglantine*, and *The Oak and the Broom*, vol. ii., p. 169.

plant flowers in both these places to-morrow. We wished for Mary and Sara. . . .

"*Sat. 24th.*— . . . We walked in the evening to Rydal. Coleridge and I lingered behind. Coleridge stopped up the little runnel by the road-side to make a lake. We all stood to look at Glow-worm Rock—a primrose that grew there,* and just looked out on the road from its own sheltered bower. The clouds moved, as William observed, in one regular body like a multitude in motion—a sky all clouds over, not one cloud. On our return it broke a little out, and we saw here and there a star. One appeared but for a moment in a pale blue sky.

"*Sunday, 25th April.*—After breakfast we set off with Coleridge towards Keswick. . . . We spent the morning in the orchard reading the *Epithalamium* of Spenser; walked backwards and forwards. . . .

"*Monday, 26th.*—I copied William's poems for Coleridge. . . .

"*Tuesday, 27th.*— . . . In the evening W. began to write the 'Tinker'; we had a letter and verses from Coleridge.

"*Wednesday, 28th April.*— . . . I copied *The Prioress's Tale*. William was in the orchard. I went to him; he worked away at his poem. . . . I happened to say that when I was a child I would not have pulled a strawberry blossom. I left him, and wrote out *The Manciple's Tale*. At dinner time he came in with the poem of *Children Gathering Flowers*,† but it was not quite finished, and it kept him long off his dinner. It is now done. He is working at the 'Tinker.' . . . We corrected the Chaucers, but I could not finish them to-night. . . .

"*Monday, 29th.*— . . . After I had written down the

* See *The Primrose of the Rock*, vol. vii., p. 260.

† See *Foresight*, vol. ii., p. 267.

'Tinker,' which William finished this morning, . . . we went to John's Grove, sate a while at first; afterwards William lay, and I lay, in the trench under the fence—he with his eyes shut, and listening to the waterfalls and the birds. There was no one waterfall above another—it was a sound of waters in the air—the voice of the air. . . . We were unseen by one another. We thought that it would be so sweet thus to lie in the grave, to hear the peaceful sounds of the earth, and just to know that our dear friends were near. The lake was still; there was a boat out. Silver How reflected with delicate purple and yellowish hues, as I have seen spar; lambs on the islands, and running races together by the half-dozen, in the round field near us. The copses greenish, hawthorns green, . . . cottages smoking. As I lay down on the grass, I observed the glittering silver line on the ridge of the backs of the sheep, owing to their situation respecting the sun, which made them look beautiful, but with something of strangeness, like animals of another kind, as if belonging to a more splendid world. . . . I got mullins and pansies. . . .

"*Friday, April 30th.*—We came into the orchard directly after breakfast, and sate there. The lake was calm, the day cloudy. . . . Two fishermen by the lake side. William began to write the poem of *The Celandine*.^{*} . . . Walked backwards and forwards with William—he repeated his poem to me, then he got to work again and would not give over. . . . William fell asleep, . . . having been disturbed the night before with reading Coleridge's letter. . . . I lay with half-shut eyes looking at the prospect as on a vision almost, I was so resigned † to it. Loughrig Fell was the most

^{*} See vol. ii., p. 269.

[†] "Resigned" is curiously used in the Lake District. A woman there once told me that Mr Ruskin was "very much resigned to his own company."

distant hill, then came the lake, slipping in between the copses. Above the copse, the round swelling field; nearer to me, a wild intermixture of rocks, trees, and patches of grassy ground. When we turned the corner of our little shelter, we saw the church and the whole vale. It is a blessed place. The birds were about us on all sides . . . and flew over our heads, as we were warned by the sound of the beating of the air above. We stayed till the light of day was going, and the little birds had begun to settle their singing. But there was a thrush not far off, that seemed to sing louder and clearer than the thrushes had sung when it was quite day. . . .

"Saturday, May 1st.—. . . A clear sky. . . . I sowed the flowers, William helped me. We then went and sate in the orchard. . . . It was very hot. William wrote *The Celandine*.* We planned a shed, for the sun was too much for us. After dinner, we went again to our old resting-place in the hollins under the rock. We first lay under the holly, where we saw nothing but the tree, and a budding elm mossed, with the sky above our heads. But that holly-tree had a beauty about it more than its own. . . . When the sun had got low enough, we went to the rock shade. Oh, the overwhelming beauty of the vale below, greener than green! Two ravens flew high, high in the sky, and the sun shone upon their bellies and their wings, long after there was none of his light to be seen but a little space on the top of Loughrigg Fell. Heard the cuckoo to-day, this first of May. We went down to tea at eight o'clock, . . . and returned after tea. The landscape was fading: sheep and lambs quiet among the rocks. We walked towards King's, and backwards and forwards. The

* Doubtless the second of the two poems, beginning thus—

"Pleasures newly found are sweet."

sky was perfectly cloudless. . . . Three solitary stars in the middle of the blue vault, one or two on the points of the high hills.

"*Tuesday, 4th May.*—Though William went to bed nervous and jaded in the extreme, he rose refreshed. I wrote out *The Leech Gatherer* for him, which he had begun the night before, and of which he wrote several stanzas in bed this morning. [They started to walk to Wytheburn.] It was very hot. . . . We rested several times by the way,—read, and repeated *The Leech Gatherer*. . . . We saw Coleridge on the Wytheburn side of the water; he crossed the beck to us. Mr Simpson was fishing there. William and I ate luncheon, and then went on towards the waterfall. It is a glorious wild solitude under that lofty purple crag. It stood upright by itself; its own self, and its shadow below, one mass; all else was sunshine. We went on further. A bird at the top of the crag was flying round and round, and looked in thinness and transparency, shape and motion like a moth. . . . We climbed the hill, but looked in vain for a shade, except at the foot of the great waterfall. We came down, and rested upon a moss-covered rock rising out of the bed of the river. There we lay, ate our dinner, and stayed there till about four o'clock or later. William and Coleridge repeated and read verses. I drank a little brandy and water, and was in heaven. The stag's horn is very beautiful and fresh, springing upon the fells; mountain ashes, green. We drank tea at a farm house. . . . We parted from Coleridge at Sara's crag, after having looked for the letters which C. carved in the morning. I missed them all. William deepened the X with C's penknife. We sate afterwards on the wall, seeing the sun go down, and the reflections in the still water. C. looked well, and parted from us cheerfully, hopping upon the side stones. On the Raise we met a woman with two little girls, one in her arms, the other, about four years old,

walking by her side, a pretty little thing, but half-starved. . . . Young as she was she walked carefully with them. Alas, too young for such cares and such travels. The mother, when we accosted her, told us how her husband had left her, and gone off with another woman, and how she '*pursued*' them. Then her fury kindled, and her eyes rolled about. She changed again to tears. She was a Cockermouth woman, thirty years of age—a child at Cockermouth when I was. I was moved, and gave her a shilling. . . . We had the crescent moon with the 'auld moon in her arms.' We rested often, always upon the bridges. Reached home at about ten o'clock. . . . We went soon to bed. I repeated verses to William while he was in bed; he was soothed, and I left him. 'This is the spot' over and over again.

"Wednesday, 5th May.—A very fine morning, rather cooler than yesterday. We planted three-fourths of the bower. I made bread. We sate in the orchard. The thrush sang all day, as he always sings. I wrote to the Hutchinsons, and to Coleridge. Packed off Thalaba. William had kept off work till near bed-time, when we returned from our walk. Then he began again, and went to bed very nervous. We walked in the twilight, and walked till night came on. The moon had the old moon in her arms, but not so plain to be seen as the night before. When we went to bed it was a boat without the circle. I read *The Lover's Complaint* to William in bed, and left him composed.

"Thursday, 6th May.—A sweet morning. We have put the finishing stroke to our bower, and here we are sitting in the orchard. It is one o'clock. We are sitting upon a seat under the wall, which I found my brother building up, when I came to him. . . . He had intended that it should have been done before I came. It is a nice, cool, shady spot. The small birds are singing, lambs bleating, cuckoos calling,

the thrush sings by fits, Thomas Ashburnam's axe is going quietly (without passion) in the orchard, hens are cackling, flies humming, the women talking together at their doors, plum and pear trees are in blossom—apple trees greenish—the opposite woods green, the crows are cawing, we have heard ravens, the ash trees are in blossom, birds flying all about us, the stitchwort is coming out, there is one budding lychnis, the primroses are passing their prime, celandine, violets, and wood sorrel for ever more, little geraniums and pansies on the wall. We walked in the evening to Tail End, to inquire about hurdles for the orchard shed. . . . When we came in we found a magazine, and review, and a letter from Coleridge, verses to Hartley, and Sara H. We read the review, &c. The moon was a perfect boat, a silver boat, when we were out in the evening. The birch tree is all over green in *small* leaf, more light and elegant than when it is full out. It bent to the breezes, as if for the love of its own delightful motions. Sloe-thorns and hawthorns in the hedges.

"*Friday, 7th May.*—William had slept uncommonly well, O, feeling himself strong, he fell to work at *The Leech Gatherer*; he wrote hard at it till dinner time, then he gave over, tired to death—he had finished the poem. I was making Derwent's frocks. After dinner we sate in the orchard. It was a thick, hazy, dull air. The thrush sang almost continually; the little birds were more than usually busy with their voices. The sparrows are now full fledged. The nest is so full that they lie upon one another; they sit quietly in their nest with closed mouths. I walked to Rydal after tea, which we drank by the kitchen fire. The evening very dull; a terrible kind of threatening brightness at sunset above Easedale. The sloe-thorn beautiful in the hedges, and in the wild spots higher up among the hawthorns. No letters. William met me. He had been digging in my

absence, and cleaning the well. We walked up beyond Lewthwaites. A very dull sky; coolish; crescent moon now and then. I had a letter brought me from Mrs Clarkson while we were walking in the orchard. I observed the sorrel leaves opening at about nine o'clock. William went to bed tired with thinking about a poem.

"*Saturday Morning, 8th May.*—We sowed the scarlet beans in the orchard, and read *Henry V.* there. William lay on his back on the seat, and wept. . . . After dinner William added one to the orchard steps.

"*Sunday Morning, 9th May.*—The air considerably colder to-day, but the sun shone all day. William worked at *The Leech Gatherer* almost incessantly from morning till tea-time. I copied *The Leech Gatherer* and other poems for Coleridge. I was oppressed and sick at heart, for he wearied himself to death. After tea he wrote two stanzas in the manner of Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, and was tired out. Bad news of Coleridge.

"*Monday, 10th May.*—A fine clear morning, but cold. William is still at work, though it is past ten o'clock; he will be tired out, I am sure. My heart fails in me. He worked a little at odd things, but after dinner he gave over. An affecting letter from Mary H. We sate in the orchard before dinner. . . . I wrote to Mary H. . . . I wrote to Coleridge, sent off reviews and poems. Went to bed at twelve o'clock. William did not sleep till three o'clock.

"*Tuesday, 11th May.*—A cool air. William finished the stanzas about C. and himself. He did not go out to-day. Miss Simpson came in to tea, which was lucky enough, for it interrupted his labours. I walked with her to Rydal. The evening cool; the moon only now and then to be seen; the lake purple as we went; primroses still in abundance. William did not meet me. He completely finished his poem, I finished Derwent's frocks. We went to bed at twelve o'clock. . . .

"*Wednesday, 12th May.*—A sunshiny, but coldish morning. We walked into Easedale. . . . We brought home heckberry blossom, crab blossom, the anemone nemorosa, marsh marigold, speedwell,—that beautiful blue one, the colour of the blue-stone or glass used in jewellery—with the beautiful pearl-like chives. Anemones are in abundance, and still the dear dear primroses, violets in beds, pansies in abundance, and the little celandine. I pulled a bunch of the taller celandine. Butterflies of all colours. I often see some small ones of a pale purple lilac, or emperor's eye colour, something of the colour of that large geranium which grows by the lake side. . . . William pulled ivy with beautiful berries. I put it over the chimney-piece. Sate in the orchard the hour before dinner, coldish. . . . In the evening we were sitting at the table writing, when we were roused by Coleridge's voice below. He had walked; looked palish, but was not much tired. We sate up till one o'clock, all together, then William went to bed, and I sate with C. in the sitting-room (where he slept) till a quarter past two o'clock. Wrote to M. H.

"*Thursday, 13th May.*—The day was very cold, with snow showers. Coleridge had intended going in the morning to Keswick, but the cold and showers hindered him. We went with him after tea as far as the plantations by the roadside descending to Wytheburn. He did not look well when we parted from him. . . .

"*Friday, 14th May.*—A very cold morning—hail and snow showers all day. We went to Brothers wood, intending to get plants, and to go along the shore of the lake to the foot. We did go a part of the way, but there was no pleasure in stepping along that difficult sauntering road in this ungenial weather. We turned again, and walked backwards and forwards in Brothers wood. William tired himself with seeking an epithet for the cuckoo. I sate a

while upon my last summer seat, the mossy stone. William^s, unoccupied, beside me, and the space between, where Coleridge has so often lain. The oak trees are just putting forth yellow knots of leaves. The ashes with their flowers passing away, and leaves coming out; the blue hyacinth is not quite full blown; gowans are coming out; marsh marygol^ds in full glory; the little star plant, a star without a flower. We took home a great load of gowans, and planted them about the orchard. After dinner, I worked bread, then came and mended stockings beside William; he fell asleep. After tea I walked to Rydal for letters. It was a strange night. The hills were covered over with a slight covering of hail or snow, just so as to give them a hoary winter look with the black rocks. The woods looked miserable, the coppices green as grass, which looked quite unnatural, and they seemed half shrivelled up, as if they shrank from the air. O, thought I! what a beautiful thing God has made winter to be, by stripping the trees, and letting us see their shapes and forms. What a freedom does it seem to give to the storms! There were several new flowers out, but I had no pleasure in looking at them. I walked as fast as I could back again with my letter from S. H. . . . Met William at the top of White Moss. . . . Near ten when we came in. William and Molly had dug the ground and planted potatoes in my absence. We wrote to Coleridge; sent off bread and frocks to the C.'s. Went to bed at half-past eleven. William very nervous. After he was in bed, haunted with altering *The Rainbow*.

"Saturday, 15th.—A very cold and cheerless morning. I sate mending stockings all the morning. I read in Shakespeare. William lay very late because he slept ill last night. It snowed this morning just like Christmas. We had a melancholy letter from Coleridge at bedtime.

It distressed me very much, and I resolved upon going to Keswick the next day."

(The following is written on the blotting-paper opposite this date:—)

"S. T. Coleridge.

Dorothy Wordsworth. William Wordsworth.

Mary Hutchinson. Sara Hutchinson.

William. Coleridge. Mary.

Dorothy. Sara.

16th May

1802.

John Wordsworth."

"*Sunday, 16th.*—William was at work all the morning. I did not go to Keswick. A sunny, cold, frosty day. A snow-storm at night. We were a good while in the orchard in the morning.

"*Monday, 17th May.*—William was not well, he went with me to Wytheburn water, and left me in a post-chaise. Hail showers, snow, and cold attacked me. The people were gravings peats under Nadel Fell. A lark and thrush singing near Coleridge's house. Bancrofts there. A letter from M. H.

"*Tuesday, 18th May.*—Terribly cold, Coleridge not well. Troude called, Wilkinsons called, C. and I walked in the evening in the garden. Warmer in the evening. Wrote to M. and S.

"*Wednesday, 19th May.*—A grey morning—not quite so cold. C. and I set off at half-past nine o'clock. Met William near the six-mile stone. We sate down by the road-side, and then went to Wytheburn water. Longed to be at the island. Sate in the sun. We drank tea at John Stanley's. The evening cold and clear. A glorious light on Skiddaw. I was tired. Brought a cloak down

from Mr Simpson's. Packed up books for Coleridge got supper, and went to bed.

"*Thursday, 20th May.*—A frosty, clear morning. in bed late. William got to work. I was somewhat. We sate in the orchard sheltered all the morning. In evening there was a fine rain. We received a letter from Coleridge telling us that he wished us not to go to Ke

"*Friday, 21st May.*—A very warm gentle morning. little rain. William wrote two sonnets on Buonaparte. I had read Milton's sonnets to him. In the evening went with Mr Simpson with Borwick's boat to gather in Bainriggs. I plashed about the well, was much wet, and I think I caught cold.

"*Saturday, 22nd May.*—A very hot morning. strong wind, as if coming from a sand desert. We met Coleridge. He was sitting under Sara's rock. When we reached he turned with us. We sate a long time under the shade of a sheep-fold. Had some interesting, melancholy talk about his private affairs. We drank tea at a farm-house. The woman was very kind. There was a woman with children travelling from Workington to Manchester. The woman served them liberally. Afterwards she said 'she never suffered any to go away without a trifle of what we have.' The woman at whose house we drank tea the last time was rich and senseless—she said 'she never served any but their own poor.' C. came home with us. We sate some time in the orchard . . . Letters from W. and M. H.

"*Sunday.*—I sat with C. in the orchard all the morning. . . . We walked in Bainrigg's after tea. Saw the lake—umbrella shaped. C. went to the Points,* joined the White Moss.

* Mary Point and Sara Point; the "two heath-clad rocks" referred to in one of the *Poems on the Naming of Places*.

"*Monday, 24th May.*—A very hot morning. We were ready to go off with Coleridge, but foolishly sauntered, and Miss Taylor and Miss Stanley called. William and Coleridge and I went afterwards to the top of the Raise.

"I had sent off a letter to Mary by C. I wrote again, and to C.

"*Tuesday, 25th.*— . . Papers and short note from C.; again no sleep for William.

Friday, 28th.— . . William tired himself with hammering at a passage.

" . . . We sate in the orchard. The sky cloudy, the air sweet and cool. The young bulfinches, in their party-coloured raiment, bustle about among the blossoms, and poise themselves like wire-dancers or tumblers, shaking the twigs and clashing off the blossoms.* There is yet one primrose in the orchard. The stitchwort is fading. The vetches are in abundance, blossoming and seeding. That pretty little wavy-looking dial-like yellow flower, the speedwell, and some others, whose names I do not yet know. The wild columbines are coming into beauty; some of the gowans fading. In the garden we have lilies, and many other flowers. The scarlet beans are up in crowds. It is now between eight and nine o'clock. It has rained sweetly for two hours and a half; the air is very mild. The heckberry blossoms are dropping off fast, almost gone; barberries are in beauty; snowballs coming forward; May roses blossoming.

"*Saturday, 29th.*— . . . William finished his poem on going for Mary. I wrote it out. I wrote to Mary H., having received a letter from her in the evening. A sweet day. We nailed up the honeysuckles, and hoed the scarlet beans.

* Compare *The Green Linnet*, vol. ii., p. 319.

"*Monday, 31st.*— . . . We sat out all the day. . . . I wrote out the poem on 'Our Departure,' which he seemed to have finished. In the evening Miss Simpson brought us a letter from M. H., and a complimentary and critical letter to W. from John Wilson of Glasgow. . . .

"*Tuesday.*—A very sweet day, but a sad want of rain. We went into the orchard after I had written to M. H. Then on to Mr Olliff's intake. . . . The columbine was growing upon the rocks; here and there a solitary plant, sheltered and shaded by the tufts and bowers of trees. It is a graceful slender creature, a female seeking retirement, and growing freest and most graceful where it is most alone. I observed that the more shaded plants were always the tallest. A short note and gooseberries from Coleridge. We walked upon the turf near John's Grove. It was a lovely night. The clouds of the western sky reflected a saffron light upon the upper end of the lake. All was still. We went to look at Rydal. There was an Alpine, fire-like red upon the tops of the mountains. This was gone when we came in view of the lake. But we saw the lake from a new and most beautiful point of view, between two little rocks, and behind a small ridge that had concealed it from us. This white moss, a place made for all kinds of beautiful works of art and nature, woods and valleys, fairy valleys and fairy tarns, miniature mountains, alps above alps.

"*Wednesday, 2nd June.*—In the morning we observed that the scarlet beans were drooping in the leaves in great numbers, owing, we guess, to an insect. . . . Yesterday an old man called, a grey-headed man, above seventy years of age. He said he had been a soldier, that his wife and children had died in Jamaica. He had a beggar's wallet over his shoulders; a coat of shreds and patches, altogether of a drab colour; he was tall, and though his body was bent, he had the look of

one used to have been upright. I talked a while, and then gave him a piece of cold bacon and some money. Said he, 'You're a fine woman!' I could not help smiling; I suppose he meant, 'You're a kind woman.' Afterwards a woman called, travelling to Glasgow. After dinner we went into Frank's field, crawled up the little glen, and planned a seat; . . . found a beautiful shell-like purple fungus in Frank's field. After tea we walked to Butterlip How, and backwards and forwards there. All the young oak tree leaves are dry as powder. A cold south wind, portending rain. . . .

"*Thursday, 3rd June 1802.*—A very fine rain. I lay in my bed till ten o'clock. William much better than yesterday. We walked into Easedale. . . . The cuckoo sang, and we watched the little birds as we sate at the door of the cow-house. The oak copses are brown, as in autumn, with the late frosts. . . . We have been reading the life and some of the writings of poor Logan since dinner. There are many affecting lines and passages in his poem, *e.g.*,

'And everlasting longings for the lost.'

. . . William is now sleeping with the window open, lying on the window seat. The thrush is singing. There are, I do believe, a thousand buds on the honeysuckle tree, all small and far from blowing, save one that is retired behind the twigs close to the wall, and as snug as a bird nest. John's rose tree is very beautiful, blended with the honeysuckle.

"Yesterday morning William walked as far as the Swan with Aggy Fisher, who was going to attend upon Goan's dying infant. She said, 'There are many heavier crosses than the death of an infant;' and went on, 'There was a woman in this vale who buried four grown-up children in one year, and I have heard her say, when many years were gone by, that she had more pleasure in thinking of those four than of her living children, for as children get up and

have families of their own, their duty to their parents *wears out and weakens*. She could trip lightly by the graves of those who died when they were young . . . as she went to church on a Sunday.'

"*Thursday, 3rd June.*— . . . A very affecting letter came from M. H., while I was sitting in the window reading Milton's *Penseroso* to William. I answered this letter before I went to bed.

"*Saturday, 5th.*—A fine showery morning. I made both pies and bread; but we first walked into Easedale, and sate under the oak trees, upon the mossy stones. There were one or two slight showers. The gowans were flourishing along the banks of the stream. The strawberry flower hanging over the brook; all things soft and green. In the afternoon William sate in the orchard. I went there; was tired, and fell asleep. William began a letter to John Wilson.

"*Sunday, 6th June.*—A showery morning. We were writing the letter to John Wilson when Ellen came. . . . After dinner I walked into John Fisher's intake with Ellen. He brought us letters from Coleridge, Mrs Clarkson, and Sara Hutchinson. . . .

"*Monday, 7th June.*—I wrote to Mary H. this morning; sent the C. 'Indolence' poem. Copied the letter to John Wilson, and wrote to my brother Richard and Mrs Coleridge. In the evening I walked with Ellen to Butterlip How. . . . It was a very sweet evening; there was the cuckoo and the little birds; the copses still injured, but the trees in general looked most soft and beautiful in tufts. . . . I went with Ellen in the morning to Rydal Falls. . . .

"*Tuesday, 8th June.*—Ellen and I rode to Windermere. We had a fine sunny day, neither hot nor cold. I mounted the horse at the quarry. We had no difficulties or delays

but at the gates. I was enchanted with some of the views. From the High Ray the view is very delightful, rich, and festive, water and wood, houses, groves, hedgerows, green fields, and mountains; white houses, large and small. We passed two or three new-looking statesmen's houses. The Curwens' shrubberies looked pitiful enough under the native trees. We put up our horses, ate our dinner by the water-side, and walked up to the Station. We went to the Island, walked round it, and crossed the lake with our horse in the ferry. The shrubs have been cut away in some parts of the island. I observed to the boatman that I did not think it improved. He replied: 'We think it is, for one could hardly see the house before.' It seems to me to be, however, no better than it was. They have made no natural glades; it is merely a lawn with a few miserable young trees, standing as if they were half-starved. There are no sheep, no cattle upon these lawns. It is neither one thing nor another—neither natural, nor wholly cultivated and artificial, which it was before. And that great house! Mercy upon us! if it *could* be concealed, it would be well for all who are not pained to see the pleasantest of earthly spots deformed by man. But it *cannot* be covered. Even the tallest of our old oak trees would not reach to the top of it. When we went into the boat, there were two men standing at the landing-place. One seemed to be about sixty, a man with a jolly red face; he looked as if he might have lived many years in Mr Curwen's house. He wore a blue jacket and trousers, as the people who live close by Windermere, particularly at the places of chief resort. . . . He looked significantly at our boatman just as we were rowing off, and said, 'Thomas, mind you take the directions off that cask. You know what I mean. It will serve as a blind for them. *You* know. It was a blind business, both for you, and the coachman, . . . and all of

us. Mind you take off the directions. "A wink's as good as a nod with some folks;" and then he turned round, looking at his companion with an air of self-satisfaction, and deep insight into unknown things! I could hardly help laughing outright at him. The laburnums blossom freely at the island, and in the shrubberies on the shore; they are blighted everywhere else. Roses of various sorts now out. The brooms were in full glory everywhere, 'veins of gold' among the copses. The hawthorns in the valley fading away; beautiful upon the hills. We reached home at three o'clock. After tea William went out and walked and wrote that poem,

'The sun has long been set,' &c.

He . . . walked on our own path and wrote the lines; he called me into the orchard, and there repeated them to me. . . .

"*Wednesday, 9th June.*— . . The hawthorns on the mountain sides like orchards in blossom. . . .

"*Thursday, 10th June.*— . . Coleridge came in with a sack full of books, &c., and a branch of mountain ash. It had been attacked by a cow. He came over by Grisda. A furious wind. . . .

"*Saturday, 12th June.*—A rainy morning. Coleridge set off before dinner. We went with him to the Raise, but it rained, so we went no further. Sheltered under a wall. He would be sadly wet, for a furious shower came on just when we parted. . . .

"*Sunday, 13th June.*—A fine morning. Sunshiny and bright, but with rainy clouds. William . . . has been altering the poem to Mary this morning. . . . I wrote out poems for our journey. . . . Mr Simpson came when we were in the orchard in the morning, and brought us a beautiful drawing which he had done. In the evening we walked.

first on our own path. . . . It was a silent night. The stars were out by ones and twos, but no cuckoo, no little birds; the air was not warm, and we have observed that since Tuesday, 8th, when William wrote, 'The sun has long been set,' that we have had no birds singing after the evening is fairly set in. We walked to our new view of Rydal, but it put on a sullen face. There was an owl hooting in Bainrigg's. Its first halloo was so like a human shout that I was surprised, when it gave its second call tremulous and lengthened out, to find that the shout had come from an owl. The full moon (not quite full) was among a company of shady island clouds, and the sky bluer about it than the natural sky blue. William observed that the full moon, above a dark fir grove, is a fine image of the descent of a superior being. There was a shower which drove us into John's Grove before we had quitted our favourite path. We walked upon John's path before we went to view Rydal. . . .

"Monday, 14th.—. . . William wrote to Mary and Sara about *The Leech Gatherer*, and wrote to both of them in one . . . and to Coleridge also. . . . I walked with William . . . on our own path. We were driven away by the horses that go on the commons; then we went to look at Rydal; walked a little in the fir grove; went again to the top of the hill, and came home. A mild and sweet night. William stayed behind me. I threw him the cloak out of the window. The moon overcast. He sate a few minutes in the orchard; came in sleepy, and hurried to bed. I carried him his bread and butter.

"Tuesday, 15th.—A sweet grey, mild morning. The birds sing soft and low. William has not slept all night; it wants only ten minutes of ten, and he is in bed yet. After William rose we went and sate in the orchard till dinner time. We walked a long time in the evening upon

our favourite path ; the owls hooted, the night hawk sang to itself incessantly, but there was no little birds, no thrushes. I left William writing a few lines about the night hawk and other images of the evening, and went to seek for letters. . . .

" *Wednesday, 16th.* — We walked towards Rydal for letters. . . . One from Mary. We went up into Rydal woods and read it there. We sate near the old wall, which fenced a hazel grove, which William said was exactly like the filbert grove at Middleham. It is a beautiful spot, a sloping or rather steep piece of ground, with hazels growing 'tall and erect' in clumps at distances, almost seeming regular, as if they had been planted. . . . I wrote to Mary after dinner, while William sate in the orchard. . . . I spoke of the little birds keeping us company, and William told me that that very morning a bird had perched upon his leg. He had been lying very still, and had watched this little creature. It had come under the bench where he was sitting. . . . He thoughtlessly stirred himself to look further at it, and it flew on to the apple tree above him. It was a little young creature that had just left its nest, equally unacquainted with man, and unaccustomed to struggle against the storms and winds. While it was upon the apple tree the wind blew about the stiff boughs, and the bird seemed bemazed, and not strong enough to strive with it. The swallows come to the sitting-room window as if wishing to build, but I am afraid they will not have courage for it ; but I believe they will build in my room window. They twitter, and make a bustle, and a little cheerful song, hanging against the panes of glass with their soft white bellies close to the glass and their forked fish-like tails. They swim round and round, and again they come. . . . I do not now see the brownness that was in the copices. The bower hawthorn blossoms passed away. Those

on the hills are a faint white. The wild guelder-rose is coming out, and the wild roses. I have seen no honey-suckles yet. . . . Foxgloves are now frequent.

"*Thursday, 17th.*— . . . When I came home I found William at work attempting to alter a stanza in the poem on our going for Mary, which I convinced him did not need altering. We sate in the house after dinner. In the evening walked on our favourite path. A short letter from Coleridge. William added a little to the Ode he is writing.*

"*Friday, 18th June.*—When we were sitting after breakfast . . . Luff came in. He had rode over the Fells. He brought news about Lord Lowther's intention to pay all debts, &c., and a letter from Mr Clarkson. He saw our garden, was astonished at the scarlet beans, &c., &c., &c. When he was gone, we wrote to Coleridge, M. H., and my brother Richard about the affair. William determined to go to Eusemere on Monday. . . .

"*Saturday, 19th.*—The swallows were very busy under my window this morning. . . . Coleridge, when he was last here, told us that for many years, there being no Quaker meeting at Keswick, a single old Quaker woman used to go regularly alone every Sunday to attend the meeting-house, and there used to sit and perform her worship alone, in that beautiful place among those fir trees, in that spacious vale, under the great mountain Skiddaw!!! . . . On Thursday morning Miss Hudson of Workington called. She said, ' . . . I sow flowers in the parks several miles from home, and my mother and I visit them, and watch them how they grow.' This may show that botanists may be often deceived when they find rare flowers growing far from houses. This was a very ordinary young woman, such as in any town in the North of England one may find a score. I sate up a while after William. He

* Doubtless the *Ode on Immortality*. See vol. iv., p. 47.

then called me down to him. (I was writing to Mary H.) I read Churchill's *Rosciad*. Returned again to my writing, and did not go to bed till he called to me. The shutters were closed, but I heard the birds singing. There was our own thrush, shouting with an impatient shout; so it sounded to me. The morning was still, the twittering of the little birds was very gloomy. The owls had hooted a quarter of an hour before, now the cocks were crowing, it was near daylight, I put out my candle, and went to bed. . . .

"*Sunday, 20th.*— . . . We were in the orchard a great part of the morning. After tea we walked upon our own path for a long time. We talked sweetly together about the disposal of our riches. We lay upon the sloping turf. Earth and sky were so lovely that they melted our very hearts. The sky to the north was of a chastened yet rich yellow, fading into pale blue, and streaked and scattered over with steady islands of purple, melting away into shades of pink. It was like a vision to me. . . .

"*Tuesday morning.*— . . . I walked to Rydal. I waited long for the post, lying in the field, and looking at the distant mountains, looking and listening to the river. I met the post. Letters from Montagu and Richard. I hurried back, forwarded these to William, and wrote to Montagu. When I came home I wrote to my brother Christopher. I could settle to nothing. . . . I read the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and began *As You Like It*.

"*Wednesday, 23rd June.*— . . . A sunshiny morning. I walked to the top of the hill and sate under a wall near John's Grove, facing the sun. I read a scene or two in *As You Like It*. . . . Coleridge and Leslie came just as I had lain down after dinner. C. brought me William's letter. He had got well to Eusemere. Coleridge and I accompanied Leslie to the boat-house. It was a sullen,

coldish evening, no sunshine; but after we had parted from Leslie a light came out suddenly that repaid us for all. It fell only upon one hill, and the island, but it arrayed the grass and trees in gem-like brightness. I cooked Coleridge's supper. We sate up till one o'clock.

"*Thursday, 24th June.*—I went with C. half way up the Raise. It was a cool morning. . . . William came in just when M. had left me. It was a mild, rainy evening. . . . We sate together talking till the first dawning of day; a happy time.

"*Friday, 25th June.*— . . . I went, just before tea, into the garden. I looked up at my swallow's nest, and it was gone. It had fallen down. Poor little creatures, they could not themselves be more distressed than I was. I went upstairs to look at the ruins. They lay in a large heap upon the window ledge; these swallows had been ten days employed in building this nest, and it seemed to be almost finished. I had watched them early in the morning, in the day many and many a time, and in the evenings when it was almost dark. I had seen them sitting together side by side in their unfinished nest, both morning and night. When they first came about the window they used to hang against the panes, with their white bellies and their forked tails, looking like fish; but then they fluttered and sang their own little twittering song. As soon as the nest was broad enough, a sort of ledge for them, they sate both mornings and evenings, but they did not pass the night there. I watched them one morning, when William was at Eusemere, for more than an hour. Every now and then there was a motion in their wings, a sort of tremulousness, and they sang a low song to one another.

. . . It is now eight o'clock; I will go and see if my

swallows are on their nest. Yes! there they are, side by side, both looking down into the garden. I have been out on purpose to see their faces. I knew by looking at the window that they were there. . . . Coleridge and William came in at about half-past eleven. They talked till after twelve.

"*Wednesday, 30th June.*— . . . We met an old man between the Raise and Lewthwaites. He wore a rusty but untorn hat, an excellent blue coat, waistcoat, and breeches, and good mottled worsted stockings. His beard was very thick and grey, of a fortnight's growth we guessed; it was a regular beard, like grey *plush*. His bundle contained Sheffield ware. William said to him, after we had asked him what his business was, 'You are a very old man?' 'Aye, I am eighty-three.' I joined in, 'Have you any children?' 'Children? Yes, plenty. I have children and grand-children, and great-grand-children. I have a great-grand-daughter, a fine lass, thirteen years old.' I then said, 'Won't they take care of you?' He replied, much offended, 'Thank God, I can take care of myself.' He said he had been a servant of the Marquis of Granby—'O he was a good man; he's in heaven; I hope he is.' He then told us how he 'shot himself' at Bath, that he was with him in Germany, and travelled with him everywhere. 'He was a famous boxer, sir.' And then he told us a story of his fighting with his farmer. 'He used always to call me bland and sharp.' Then every now and then he broke out, 'He was a good man! When we were travelling he never asked at the public-houses, as it might be there,' (pointing to the 'Swan'), 'what we were to pay, but he would put his hand into his pocket and give them what he liked; and when he came out of the house they would say, now, they would have charged me a shilling or tenpence. God help them, poor creatures!' I asked him again about his

children, how many he had. Says he, 'I cannot tell you' (I suppose he confounded children and grand-children together); 'I have one daughter that keeps a boarding-school at Skipton, in Craven. She teaches flowering and marking. And another that keeps a boarding-school at Ingleton. I brought up my family under the Marquis.' He was familiar with all parts of Yorkshire. He asked us where we lived. At Grasmere. 'The bonniest dale in all England!' says the old man. I bought a pair of slippers from him, and we sate together by the road-side. When we parted I tried to lift his bundle, and it was almost more than I could do. . . . After tea I wrote to Coleridge, and closed up my letter to M. H. We went soon to bed. A weight of children a poor man's blessing! . . .

"Friday, 2nd July.—A very rainy morning. . . . I left William, and wrote a short letter to M. H. and to Coleridge, and transcribed the alterations in *The Leech Gatherer*.

"Sunday, 4th July.—. . . William finished *The Leech Gatherer* to-day.

"Monday, 5th July.—A very sweet morning. William stayed some time in the orchard. . . . I copied out *The Leech Gatherer* for Coleridge, and for us. Wrote to Mrs Clarkson, M. H., and Coleridge. . . .

"Tuesday, 6th July.—. . . We set off towards Rydal for letters. The rain met us at the top of the White Moss, and it came on very heavily afterwards. It drove past Nab Scar in a substantial shape, as if going to Grasmere was as far as it could go. . . . The swallows have completed their beautiful nest. . . .

"Wednesday, 7th.—. . . Walked on the White Moss. Glow-worms. Well for them children are in bed when they shine.

"*Thursday, 8th.*— . . . When I was coming home, a post chaise passed with a little girl behind in a patched, ragged cloak. In the afternoon, after we had talked a little, William fell asleep. I read the *Winter's Tale*; then I went to bed, but did not sleep. The swallows stole in and out of their nest, and sate there, *whiles* quite still, *whiles* they sung low for two minutes or more, at a time just like a muffled robin. William was looking at *The Pedlar* when I got up. He arranged it, and after tea I wrote it out—280 lines. . . . The moon was behind. William hurried me out in hopes that I should see her. We walked first to the top of the hill to see Rydal. It was dark and dull, but our own vale was very solemn—the shape of Helm Crag was quite distinct, though black. We walked backwards and forwards on the White Moss path; there was a sky-like white brightness on the lake. The Wyke cottage right at the foot of Silver How. Glow-worms out, but not so numerous as last night. O, beautiful place! Dear Mary, William. The hour is come . . . I must prepare to go. The swallows, I must leave them, the wall, the garden, the roses, all. Dear creatures! they sang last night after I was in bed; seemed to be singing to one another, just before they settled to rest for the night. Well, I must go. Farewell."

Several of the poems, referred to in this Journal, are difficult, if not impossible, to identify. "The Inscription of the Pathway," finished on the 28th of August 1800; "The Epitaph," written on the 28th January 1801; "The Yorkshire Wolds poem," referred to on March 10th, 1802; also "The Silver Howe poem," and that known in the Wordsworth household as "The Tinker." It is possible that some of them were intentionally suppressed.

CHAPTER XVI.

VISIT TO CALAIS—MARRIAGE TO MARY HUTCHINSON—RETURN TO GRASMERE.

FROM the Grasmere Journal it will be seen that Mary Hutchinson was a frequent and privileged inmate of Dove Cottage. The tie which bound her to Wordsworth had been formed in childhood. The early intimacy of the Dame School at Penrith ripened by degrees into strong mutual regard; and that passed at length into an attachment which led to marriage. They were cousins, and the cousin relationship—the connecting-link to many between the nearer tie to home and the remoter one to the world beyond—made them increasingly and familiarly intimate, long before Wordsworth had any thought of marriage. In the autumn of 1789, during his second long vacation from Cambridge, he paid a visit to Penrith, where his sister and Mary Hutchinson were staying. When he went to wait on Raisley Calvert in the same town, in 1795, Mary Hutchinson had gone to Sockburn to keep house for her brother, Thomas Hutchinson; but in the following year we find her living with the Wordsworths at Racedown. Mr Hutchinson of Kimbolton Rectory, Mr Wordsworth's nephew, supplies me with the following paragraph in reference to his aunt:—

“After the death of my grandfather in 1786, my aunt, Mary Wordsworth, remained in Penrith, and was brought up, along with some of her younger brothers and sisters, by an aunt, Miss Elizabeth Monkhouse, and a great-aunt, Mrs

Gamage. My mother's family were left motherless in 1790, and they were nourished by the same kind old ladies. On the death of my great-grandfather at Sockburn, my aunt became my father's housekeeper, and remained with him there, and at Gallow Hill, till her marriage in 1802. The passage in the sixth book of *The Prelude*, commencing 'Another maid there was,' shows that M.H. was a resident in Penrith in 1790. Towards the end of the year 1792, or the commencement of 1793, she took up her residence at Sockburn."

When the Wordsworths returned from Germany in 1799, they went straight to Sockburn, where Mary Hutchinson was keeping house; and there, with the exception of occasional excursions, the poet remained for ten months. On the 10th of November 1801, Mary came to Dove Cottage, and stayed till December 28. On that day she went with the Wordsworths to Keswick, spent a night at Greta Hall, and next day they all proceeded by Threlkeld to visit the Clarksons at Eusemere, Ullswater. Mary left them on New Year's Eve for Penrith, returning, however, very early in January to Grasmere. On the 19th January she paid a five days' visit to the Clarksons (the Wordsworths being still their guests), and on the 23rd went back to Penrith; her cousins crossing the hills, by the Grisdale Hause, to Grasmere.

There was an entire absence of romance in Wordsworth's courtship. It may almost be said there was no courtship at all, in the ordinary sense of the term. He loved Mary Hutchinson; he had always loved her; and he loved her with an ever-increasing tenderness: but his engagement to her seemed somehow to be just the natural sequel to their early unromantic regard, its development or flowering.

The supreme devotion of Wordsworth's life was to his office

as a poet. To this he was "conscript and consecrated;" and all other things ministered to it. He could portray the enthusiastic and chivalrous devotion of man to woman; but it may be doubted if he ever felt it, and in this he stands almost alone amongst poets. Milton, perhaps, comes nearest to him. He did not devote himself much, either to his sister, or to his wife. Intense as the tie between them was, Dorothy lived for him, much more than he ever lived, (or could live), for her. He was the very light of her eyes, and her supreme passion was to help him daily in his high vocation. It used to be said—half in sport, half in earnest—that she did everything for him, even wrote his love letters! and there is evidence that he often asked her to write for him to Mary Hutchinson, as he detested correspondence. It was, of course, inevitable that the wife should displace the sister, in this office of correspondent; but the "Emily" of the Alfoxden and Dove Cottage days lived on with him to the last, and retained her old function as fellow-traveller, and scribe, and "sister of the soul."

Wordsworth's wife was a noble Cumbrian maiden, with a clear intellect and an unsophisticated heart, a gentle tranquil unambitious soul, very tender-hearted, sympathetic, and full of tact. Had she possessed a larger or wider culture, she would not have been any more perfectly fitted for him; and, on his side, if there was an absence of passionate devotion, there was a calm and constant regard, and a continuity of affection to the end of life.

The readers of De Quincey's *Recollections* will remember his description of Mary Wordsworth in 1807. She "exercised," he said, "all the practical fascination of beauty, through the mere compensatory charms of sweetness all but angelic, of simplicity the most entire, womanly self-respect and purity of heart speaking through all her looks, acts, and movements." . . . "In a quiescent, reposing

meditative way, she appeared always to have a genial enjoyment from her own thoughts; . . . to feel and to enjoy in a luxurious repose of mind, there was her forte and her peculiar privilege." He speaks of the "supreme expression of her features" being that of "sunny benignity—a radiant graciousness."

Wordsworth's own verses addressed to his wife are more worthy of attention, however, than the eulogy of any critic. He tells us that, in her early days, all things about her were drawn—

"From May time and the cheerful Dawn,"

that she was

"A daring Shape, an Image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and way-lay."

Then, in the days of these visits at Racedown and Grasmere, he saw "on nearer view"—

"A Spirit, yet a Woman too,
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet.
A Creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles."

At length, when she took her place as a permanent "inmate of the heart," she was seen as

"A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveller between life and death;
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light."

Other allusions to his wife, in *The Prelude*, in the dedication of *The White Doe of Rylstone*, as well as in many of the sonnets and lyrics, are known to every reader, and are referred to in the notes to the poems where they occur; and though Mary Hutchinson was neither a Beatrice nor a Laura, and wanted some of the charms that have made the

other poets radiant, she had more enduring merits. the staying power, the truth, goodness, and confidence of character, that made her influence controlling as right, guiding, equable, and benign to the last—

“ Morn into noon did pass, noon into eve,
And the old day was welcome as the young ;
As welcome, and as beautiful—in truth
More beautiful, as being a thing more holy.”

s of the Journal that follows in this chapter may be seen at the way in which the marriage at Brompton was conducted, and still more at what followed it ;—the poet, his wife, and sister, all starting together in a post-chaise for the country! And yet it was most natural. The contrast is more striking between the simple ceremony—of which we have no record but the mere fact—in the humble parsonage at Brompton, and the marriage of Coleridge in the building of St Mary, Redcliffe, at Bristol, and what followed—Coleridge taking his bride to the cottage at Brighthelmston, and Wordsworth “ stepping westwards ” with wife and sister together, and writing a very unsentimental sonnet on the occasion of the day! And of all strange things, to go to a churchyard, and look at the tombstones, while the poet was being fed at Kirby, was about the very best that a man could do, a few hours after his wedding. With all the rootedness of his nature, its security in a region where the cables could not drag, there was a certain austerity in Wordsworth. To one side of our human life he was blind—(I grant it to be a lower blindness from the very fact that he saw so much on the other side. I daresay there are some who, on reading the Journal, that, on the eventful day of the marriage, Mary Hutchinson was more to be admired than either William or Dorothy Wordsworth. We must not forget, however, that Dorothy lost her mother in early

childhood, that her father died soon afterwards, that her next home was miserable to her, and that her brother was the very light of her eyes; but I am gliding unawares into criticism, from which I return with speed to the narrative.

This Journal records the journey of William and Dorothy from Grasmere by Keswick, Eusemere, Greta Bridge, across the Yorkshire moors to Thirsk, thence by the Hambleton Hills, Rivaux Abbey, Kirby, and Pickering, to the Hutchinson's house at Gallow Hill. There they remained for ten days (15th to 25th July), making sundry excursions to Scarborough, Wykeham, &c. It was still more than two months till the wedding day; and these months were spent by Wordsworth in a journey with his sister to the south of England, and the north of France. They went by Hull, Lincoln, and Peterborough to London, from London to Dover, and across the Channel to Calais. There they stayed four weeks, returning to London on the 30th of August. It was in leaving London on their journey south that the sonnet on Westminster Bridge was composed. Dorothy Wordsworth's descriptions of the coast scenery, and of the sunsets at Calais, are amongst the finest she ever wrote. On their return, they spent three weeks in London, and there they met their sailor-brother John, in one of his brief home-comings from the sea. They went next to Windsor, to visit the Cooksons; then, leaving London, they reached Gallow Hill on the 24th September. Ten days later, Wordsworth was married to Mary Hutchinson in Brompton Church. The commonplaceness of the note in the sister's Journal,* the extreme matter-of-factness and brevity of the entry, recording an event so momentous to her brother, presents a singular contrast to her long and minute

* So far as can be gathered, none of the brothers (neither Richard, nor Christopher, nor John) were present. I infer that John could not get away from London.

descriptions of small objects in Nature, and the most trivial incidents of travel. But really it should not surprise us. It may seem strange to say that there was nothing momentous, or out of the way, to Wordsworth, in what is to most persons a turning-point in life,—the entering of a new territory of thought, feeling, and experience. We must not judge him, however, by any ordinary standard. We must rather contemplate him as a teacher with a standard of his own. His path in life, now a selected path, to which he believed,—as firmly as any ancient seer,—that he had been expressly “called,” was one of daily communing with Nature—a high, blameless fellowship, that was its own exceeding great reward; and he went on, in his own intense way of visionary musing, though at times of painful self-involvement, profound yet *solitary*, wrapt in the contemplation of ideal visions. He was to a large extent independent of other solace, because, blest by the possession of the “inward eye” that saw every day in common things the

“light that never was on sea or land.”

In truth, his marriage was but a small “incident” in his experience. This may explain much that is otherwise strange in the sister’s record of his life, in these remarkable Journals.

Another thing we must not forget, in reading these Journals, and judging of the life at Dove Cottage, and its inmates, is the debt which Wordsworth owed to this sister, who

“maintained for him

A saving intercourse with his true self.”

She, who saved him from despondency, and started him on his career of devotion to poetry alone, could not but retain to the last a “solitary” place in his regard. The balance of his nature had been disturbed, by the issue of the French Revolution; and, despite his consecration to poetry at Hawkshead in 1787, he was on the point of renouncing his

early love, and going off to abstract mathematical science. It was his sister who brought him back to the realisation of his "office upon earth." Was it strange that one who had been thus identified with him, in the one great crisis of his life, should remain to the end, a part of his very being? Their communism, indeed, assumed some strange phases. It extended to his using her Journal at times for the materials of his poems, and extracting bits of it in his letters, not to save himself the trouble of composing himself, but because he could not compose anything better! What more natural to a man of Wordsworth's temperament and surroundings?

Dorothy wrote the following letter to Mrs Marshall before the wedding:—

"GALLOW HILL, *September 29th*, 1802.

"We were detained in London by a succession of unexpected events, the arrival of my brother Chris., then of my brother John. . . . We leave Gallow Hill on Monday morning, immediately after my brother William's marriage. We expect to reach Grasmere on Wednesday evening. William, Mary, and I go together in a post-chaise; and after Mr Hutchinson's harvest is over (when we shall have got completely settled in our own house), he and his sister Sarah will follow us, and spend some time at Grasmere and Keswick.

"I half dread that concentration of all tender feelings, past, present, and future, which will come upon me on the wedding morning. There never lived on earth a better woman than Mary Hutchinson.

"It was delightful to see all our brothers, particularly John, after his return from India. He was in perfect health and excellent spirits. We spent two days with my uncle and aunt Cookson at Windsor. . . . There is every prospect of a settlement of our affairs with Lord Lowther, entirely to our satisfaction."

The following note on Gallow Hill as it now is, has been supplied to me by Mr George Thackwray of Scarborough:—

"Gallow Hill is an isolated well-built farm-house, standing midway between Sawdon and Brompton, a field's distance beyond the railway embankment, and is well seen from the line on the right hand going from Scarborough to Pickering. Before the construction of the railway, the view from it must have been pleasing and extensive; the country round is for miles undulating and well wooded, bounded in the distance by the low range of hills known as the Wolds. The house itself is substantially the same as it was at the time of the poet's marriage, some out-buildings only having been erected in late years. A hill close to the house on the right is called Gallows Hill, having been the place of execution for criminals within the barony. Brompton Church stands pleasantly on a gentle eminence at the end of the village; the tower and spire peeping out among the trees forming a picturesque object in the landscape. From the churchyard is a good view of the Vale of Pickering. By the permission of the Vicar, the Rev. F. O. Chambers, I examined the register of the poet's marriage. The officiating minister was the Rev. John Ellis, who married Wordsworth and Mary Hutchinson on October 4th, 1802, the witnesses being Thomas Hutchinson, Joanna Hutchinson, and John Hutchinson."

Dorothy Wordsworth's record of the journey from Grasmere to Yorkshire, thence to London and to Calais, back to Yorkshire for the marriage, and thence to Grasmere, is as follows:—

"On Friday morning, July 9th, William and I set forward to Keswick on our road to Gallow Hill. We had a pleasant ride, though the day was showery. . . . Coleridge met us at Sara's Rock. . . . We had been told by a handsome man, an inhabitant of Wytheburn, with whom he had been talking (and who seemed, by-the-bye, much pleased with his

companion), that C. was waiting for us. We reached Keswick against tea-time. We called at Calvert's on the Saturday evening. . . . On Monday, 11th July, we went to Eusemere. Coleridge walked with us six or seven miles. He was not well, and we had a melancholy parting after having sate together in silence by the road-side. We turned aside to explore the country near Hutton-John, and had a new and delightful walk. The valley, which is subject to the decaying mansion that stands at its head, seems to join its testimony to that of the house, to the falling away of the family greatness, and the hedges are in bad condition. The land wants draining, and is overrun with brackens; yet there is a something everywhere that tells of its former possessors. The trees are left scattered about as if intended to be like a park, and these are very interesting, standing as they do upon the sides of the steep hills that slope down to the bed of the river, a little stony-bedded stream that spreads out to a considerable breadth at the village of Dacre. A little above Dacre we came into the right road to Mr Clarkson's, after having walked through woods and fields, never exactly knowing whether we were right or wrong. We learnt, however, that we had saved half-a-mile. We sate down by the river-side to rest, and saw some swallows flying about and under the bridge, and two little schoolboys were loitering among the scars seeking after their nests. We reached Mr Clarkson's at about eight o'clock after a sauntering walk, having lingered and loitered and sate down together that we might be alone. Mr and Mrs C. were just come from Luff's. We spent Tuesday, the 13th of July, at Eusemere; and on Wednesday morning, the 14th, we walked to Emont Bridge, and mounted the coach between Bird's Nest and Hartshorn Tree. . . . At Greta Bridge the sun shone cheerfully, and a glorious ride we had over Gaterly Moor. Every building was bathed in

golden light. The trees were more bright than earthly trees, and we saw round us miles beyond miles—Darlington spire, &c., &c. We reached Leeming Lane at about nine o'clock; supped comfortably, and enjoyed our fire.

"On Thursday morning, at a little before seven, being the 14th July, we got into a post-chaise and went to Thirsk to breakfast. We were well treated, but when the landlady understood that we were going to *walk* off, and leave our luggage behind, she threw out some saucy words in our hearing. The day was very hot, and we rested often and long before we reached the foot of the Hambleton Hills, and while we were climbing them, still oftener. . . . We were almost overpowered with thirst, when I heard the trickling of a little stream of water. I was before William, and I stopped till he came up to me. We sate a long time by this water, and climbed the hill slowly. I was footsore; the sun shone hot; the little Scotch cattle panted and tossed fretfully about. The view was hazy, and we could see nothing from the top of the hill but an undistinct wide-spreading country, full of trees, but the buildings, towns, and houses were lost. We stopped to examine that curious stone, then walked along the flat common. . . . Arrived very hungry at Rivaux. Nothing to eat at the Millers, as we expected, but at an exquisitely neat farm-house we got some boiled milk and bread. This strengthened us, and I went down to look at the ruins. Thrushes were singing; cattle feeding among green-grown hillocks about the ruins. The hillocks were scattered over with *grovelets* of wild roses and other shrubs, and covered with wild flowers. I could have stayed in this solemn quiet spot till evening, without a thought of moving, but William was waiting for me, so in a quarter of an hour I went away. We walked upon Mr Duncombe's terrace and looked down upon the abbey. It stands in a larger valley among a brotherhood of valleys, of different length

and breadth,—all woody, and running up into the hills in all directions. We reached Helmsly just at dusk. We had a beautiful view of the castle from the top of the hill, and slept at a very nice inn, and were well treated; floors as smooth as ice. On Friday morning, 16th July, we walked to Kirby. Met people coming to Helmsly fair. Were misdirected, and walked a mile out of our way. . . . A beautiful view above Pickering. . . . Met Mary and Sara seven miles from G. H. Sheltered from the rain; beautiful glen, spoiled by the large house; sweet church and churchyard. Arrived at Gallow Hill at seven o'clock.

"*Friday Evening, 16th July.*— . . . Sara, Tom, and I rode up Bedale. Wm., Mary, Sara, and I went to Scarborough, and we walked in the Abbey pasture, and to Wykeham; and on Monday, the 26th, we went off with Mary in a post-chaise. We had an interesting ride over the Wolds, though it rained all the way. Single thorn bushes were scattered about on the turf, sheep-sheds here and there, and now and then a little hut. Swelling grounds, and sometimes a single tree or a clump of trees. . . . We passed through one or two little villages, embosomed in tall trees. After we had parted from Mary, there were gleams of sunshine, but with showers. We saw Beverley in a heavy rain, and yet were much pleased with the beauty of the town. Saw the minster—a pretty, clean building, but injured very much with Grecian architecture. The country between Beverley and Hull very rich, but miserably flat—brick houses, windmills, houses again—dull and endless. Hull a frightful, dirty, brickhousey, tradesman-like, rich, vulgar place; yet the river—though the shores are so low that they can hardly be seen—looked beautiful with the evening lights upon it, and boats moving about. We walked a long time, and returned to our dull day-room but quiet evening one, to supper.

"*Tuesday, 26th.*—Market day. Streets dirty, very rainy, did not leave Hull till four o'clock, and left Barton at about six; rained all the way almost. A beautiful village at the foot of a hill with trees. A gentleman's house converted into a lady's boarding-school. . . . We left Lincoln on Wednesday morning, 27th July, at six o'clock. It rained heavily, and we could see nothing but the antientry of some of the buildings as we passed along. The night before, however, we had seen enough to make us regret this. The minster stands at the edge of a hill overlooking an immense plain. The country very flat as we went along; the day mended. We went to see the outside of the minster while the passengers were dining at Peterborough; the west end very grand. . . .

"On Thursday morning, 28th, we arrived in London. Wm. left me at the Sun. . . . After various troubles and disasters, we left London on Saturday morning at half-past five or six, the 30th of July. We mounted the Dover coach at Charing Cross. It was a beautiful morning. The city, St Paul's, with the river, and a multitude of little boats, made a most beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge. The houses were not overhung by their cloud of smoke, and they were spread out endlessly, yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a fierce light, that there was even something like the purity of one of nature's own grand spectacles.*

"We rode on cheerfully, now with the Paris diligence before us, now behind. We walked up the steep hills, a beautiful prospect everywhere, till we even reached Dover. At first the rich, populous, wide-spreading, woody country about London, then the River Thames, ships sailing, chalk cliffs, trees, little villages. Afterwards Canterbury, situated on a plain, rich and woody, but the city and cathedral disappointed me. Hop grounds on each side of the road some

* Compare the sonnet composed upon Westminster Bridge, vol. ii., p. 287.

miles from Canterbury; then we came to a common, the race ground, an elevated plain, villages among trees in the bed of a valley at our right, and, rising above this valley, green hills scattered over with wood, neat gentlemen's houses. One white house, almost hid with green trees, which we longed for, and the parson's house, as neat a place as could be, which would just have suited Coleridge. No doubt we may have found one for Tom Hutchinson and Sara, and a good farm too. We halted at a half-way house—fruit carts under the shade of trees, seats for guests, a tempting place to the weary traveller. Still, as we went along, the country was beautiful and hilly, with cottages lurking under the hills, and their little plots of hop ground like vineyards. It was a bad hop year. A woman on the top of the coach said to me, 'It is a sad thing for the poor people, for the hop-gathering is the woman's harvest; there is employment about the hops for women and children.'

"We saw the castle of Dover, and the sea beyond, four or five miles before we reached it. We looked at it through a long vale, the castle being upon an eminence, as it seemed, at the end of this vale, which opened to the sea. The country now became less fertile, but near Dover it seemed more rich again. Many buildings stand on the flat fields, sheltered with tall trees. There is one old chapel that might have been there just in the same state in which it now is when this vale was as retired, and as little known to travellers as our own Cumberland mountain wilds thirty years ago. There was also a very old building on the other side of the road, which had a strange effect among the many new ones that are springing up everywhere. It seemed odd that it could have kept itself pure in its ancients among so many upstarts. It was near dark when we reached Dover. We were told that a packet was about to sail, so we went down

to the custom-house in half-an-hour—had our luggage examined, &c., &c., and then we drank tea with the Honourable Mr Knox and his tutor. We arrived at Calais at four o'clock on Sunday morning, the 31st of July. We stayed in the vessel till half-past seven; then William went for letters at about half-past eight or nine. We found out Annette and C. chez Madame Avril dans la Rue de la Tête d'or. We lodged opposite two ladies, in tolerably decent-sized rooms, but badly furnished. . . . The weather was very hot. We walked by the sea-shore almost every evening with Annette and Caroline, or William and I alone. I had a bad cold, and could not bathe at first, but William did. It was a pretty sight to see as we walked upon the sands when the tide was low, perhaps a hundred people bathing about a quarter of a mile distant from us. And we had delightful walks after the heat of the day was passed—seeing far off in the west the coast of England like a cloud crested with Dover castle, which was but like the summit of the cloud—the evening star and the glory of the sky,* the reflections in the water were more beautiful than the sky itself; purple waves brighter than precious stones, for ever melting away upon the sands. The fort, a wooden building, at the entrance of the harbour at Calais, when the evening twilight was coming on, and we could not see anything of the building but its shape, which was far more distinct than in perfect daylight, seemed to be reared upon pillars of ebony, between which pillars the sea was seen in the most beautiful colours that can be conceived. Nothing in romance was ever half so beautiful. Now came in view, as the evening star sunk down, and the colours of the west faded away, the two lights of England, lighted up by English-

* Compare the sonnet—

“Fair star of evening, glory of the west.”

—Vol. ii., p. 238.

men in our country to warn vessels off rocks or sands. These we used to see from the pier, when we could see no other distant objects but the clouds, the sky, and the sea itself—all was dark behind. The town of Calais seemed deserted of the light of heaven, but there was always light, and life, and joy upon the sea. One night I shall never forget—the day had been very hot, and William and I walked alone together upon the pier. The sea was gloomy, for there was a blackness over all the sky, except when it was overspread with lightning, which often revealed to us a distant vessel near, as the waves roared and broke against the pier, and they were interfused with greenish fiery light. The more distant sea always black and gloomy. It was also beautiful, on the calm hot night, to see the little boats row out of harbour with wings of fire, and the sail boats with the fiery track which they cut as they went along, and which closed up after them with a hundred thousand sparkles, and streams of glow-worm light. Caroline was delighted.

“On Sunday, the 29th of August, we left Calais at twelve o'clock in the morning, and landed at Dover at one on Monday the 30th. . . . It was very pleasant to me, when we were in the harbour at Dover, to breathe the fresh air, and to look up, and see the stars among the ropes of the vessel. The next day was very hot. We . . . bathed, and sate upon the Dover Cliffs, and looked upon France with many a melancholy and tender thought. We could see the shores almost as plain as if it were but an English lake. We mounted the coach, and arrived in London at six, the 30th August. It was misty, and we could see nothing. We stayed in London till Wednesday the 22nd of September, and arrived at Gallow Hill on Friday.

“*September 24th.*—Mary first met us in the avenue. She looked so fat and well that we were made very happy by the sight of her; then came Sara, and last of all Joanna.

Tom was forking corn, standing upon the corn cart. We dressed ourselves immediately and got tea. The garden looked gay with asters and sweet peas. Jack and George came on Friday evening, 1st October. On Saturday, 2nd, we rode to Hackness, William, Jack, George, and Sara single. I behind Tom. On Sunday 3rd, Mary and Sara were busy packing.

"On Monday, 4th October 1802, my brother William was married to Mary Hutchinson. I slept a good deal of the night, and rose fresh and well in the morning. At a little after eight o'clock, I saw them go down the avenue towards the church. William had parted from me upstairs. When they were absent, my dear little Sara prepared the breakfast. I kept myself as quiet as I could, but when I saw the two men running up the walk, coming to tell us it was over, I could stand it no longer, and threw myself on the bed, where I lay in stillness, neither hearing nor seeing anything till Sara came upstairs to me, and said, 'They are coming.' This forced me from the bed where I lay, and I moved, I knew not how, straight forward, faster than my strength could carry me, till I met my beloved William, and fell upon his bosom. He and John Hutchinson led me to the house, and there I stayed to welcome my dear Mary. As soon as we had breakfasted, we departed. It rained when we set off. Poor Mary was much agitated, when she parted from her brothers and sisters, and her home. Nothing particular occurred till we reached Kirby. We had sunshine and showers, pleasant talk, love and cheerfulness. We were obliged to stay two hours at K. while the horses were feeding. We wrote a few lines to Sara, and then walked out; the sun shone, and we went to the churchyard after we had put a letter into the post-office for the *York Herald*. We sauntered about, and read the grave-stones. There was one to the memory of five children, who had all died within five years, and the longest lived had only lived four years. . . .

"We left Kirby at about half-past two. There is not much variety of prospect from K. to Helmsley, but the country is very pleasant, being rich and woody, and Helmsley itself stands very sweetly at the foot of the rising grounds of Duncombe Park, which is scattered over with tall woods; and, lifting itself above the common buildings of the town, stands Helmsley Castle, now a ruin, formerly inhabited by the gay Duke of Buckingham. Every foot of the road was of itself interesting to us, for we had travelled along it on foot, William and I, when we went to fetch our dear Mary, and had sate upon the turf by the roadside more than once. Before we reached Helmsley, our driver told us that he could not take us any further, so we stopped at the same inn where we had slept before. My heart danced at the sight of its cleanly outside, bright yellow walls, casements overshadowed with jasmine, and its low, double gavel-ended front. . . . Mary and I warmed ourselves at the kitchen fire. We then walked into the garden, and looked over a gate, up to the old ruin which stands at the top of the mount, and round about it the moats are grown up into soft green cradles, hollows surrounded with green grassy hillocks, and these are overshadowed by old trees, chiefly ashes. I prevailed upon William to go up with me to the ruins. . . . The sun shone, it was warm and very pleasant. One part of the castle seems to be inhabited. There was a man mowing nettles in the open space which had most likely once been the castle-court. There is one gateway exceedingly beautiful. Children were playing upon the sloping ground. We came home by the street. After about an hour's delay, we set forward again; had an excellent driver, who opened the gates so dexterously that the horses never stopped. Mary was very much delighted with the view of the castle from the point where we had seen it before. I was pleased to see again the little path which we

had walked upon, the gate I had climbed over, and the road down which we had seen the two little boys drag a log of wood, and a team of horses struggle under the weight of a great load of timber. We had felt compassion for the poor horses that were under the governance of oppression and ill-judging drivers, and for the poor boys, who seemed of an age to have been able to have dragged the log of wood merely out of the love of their own activity, but from poverty and bad food they panted for weakness, and were obliged to fetch their father from the town to help them. Duncombe house looks well from the road—a large building, though I believe only two-thirds of the original design are completed. We rode down a very steep hill to Rivaux valley, with woods all round us. We stopped upon the bridge to look at the Abbey, and again when we had crossed it. Dear Mary had never seen a ruined abbey before except Whitby. We recognised the cottages, houses, and the little valleys as we went along. We walked up a long hill, the road carrying us up the cleft or valley with woody hills on each side of us. When we went to G. H. I had walked down the valley alone. William followed me.

“Before we had crossed the Hambleton Hill, and reached the point overlooking Yorkshire, it was quite dark. We had not wanted, however, fair prospects before us, as we drove along the flat plain of the high hill. Far far off from us, in the western sky, we saw shapes of castles, ruins among groves, a great spreading wood, rocks, and single trees, a minster with its tower unusually distinct, minarets in another quarter, and a round Grecian Temple also; the colours of the sky of a bright grey, and the forms of a sober grey, with a dome. As we descended the hill there was no distinct view, but of a great space; only near us we saw the wild (and as the people say) bottomless tarn in the hollow at the side of the hill. It seemed to be made visible to us only by

its own light, for all the hill about us was dark. Before we reached Thirsk we saw a light before us, which we at first thought was the moon, then lime-kilns; but when we drove into the market-place it proved a large bonfire, with lads dancing round it, which is a sight I dearly love. The inn was like an illuminated house—every room full. We asked the cause, and were told by the girl that it was ‘Mr John Bell’s birthday, that he had heired his estate.’ The landlady was very civil. She did not recognise the despised foot-travellers. We rode on in the dark, and reached Leeming Lane at eleven o’clock. . . .

“The next morning we set off at about half-past eight o’clock. It was a cheerful, sunny morning. . . . We had a few showers, but when we came to the green fields of Wensley, the sun shone upon them all, and the Ure in its many windings glittered as it flowed along under the green slopes of Middleham Castle. Mary looked about for her friend Mr Place, and thought she had him sure on the contrary side of the vale from that on which we afterwards found he lived. We went to a new built house at Leyburn, the same village where William and I had dined on our road to Grasmere two years and three-quarters ago, but not the same house. The landlady was very civil, giving us cake and wine, but the horses being out we were detained at least two hours, and did not set off till two o’clock. We paid for thirty-five miles, *i.e.*, to Sedburgh, but the landlady did not encourage us to hope to get beyond Hawes. . . . When we passed through the village of Wensley my heart melted away, with dear recollections—the bridge, the little waterspout, the steep hill, the church. They are among the most vivid of my own inner visions, for they were the first objects that I saw after we were left to ourselves, and had turned our whole hearts to Grasmere as a home in which we were to rest. The vale looked most

beautiful each way. To the left the bright silver stream inlaid the flat and very green meadows, winding like a serpent. To the right, we did not see it so far, it was lost among trees and little hills. I could not help observing, as we went along, how much more varied the prospects of Wensley Dale are in the summer time than I could have thought possible in the winter. This seemed to be in great measure owing to the trees being in leaf, and forming groves and screens, and thence little openings upon recesses and concealed retreats, which in winter only made a part of the one great vale. The beauty of the summer time here as much excels that of the winter, as the variety (owing to the excessive greenness) of the fields, and the trees in leaf half concealing, and—where they do not conceal—softening the hard bareness of the limey white roofs. One of our horses seemed to grow a little restive as we went through the first village, a long village on the side of a hill. It grew worse and worse, and at last we durst not go on any longer. We walked a while, and then the post boy was obliged to take the horse out, and go back for another. We seated ourselves again snugly in the post-chaise. The wind struggled about us and rattled the window, and gave a gentle motion to the chaise, but we were warm and at our ease within. Our station was at the top of a hill, opposite Bolton Castle, the Ure flowing beneath. William has since written a sonnet on this our imprisonment. Hard was thy durance, poor Queen Mary! compared with ours. . . .*

"We had a sweet ride till we came to a public-house on the side of a hill, where we alighted and walked down to see the waterfalls. The sun was not set, and the woods and fields were spread over with the yellow light of evening,

* This sonnet was not thought worthy of being preserved. See vol. ii., p. 303.

which made their greenness a thousand times more green. There was too much water in the river for the beauty of the falls, and even the banks were less interesting than in winter. Nature had entirely got the better in her struggles against the giants who first cast the mould of these works; for, indeed, it is a place that did not in winter remind one of God, but one could not help feeling as if there had been the agency of some 'mortal instruments,' which Nature had been struggling against without making a perfect conquest. There was something so wild and new in this feeling, knowing, as we did in the inner man, that God alone had laid his hand upon it, that I could not help regretting the want of it; besides, it is a pleasure to a real lover of Nature to give winter all the glory he can, for summer *will* make its own way, and speak its own praises. We saw the pathway which William and I took at the close of evening, the path leading to the rabbit warren where we lost ourselves. Sloe farm, with its holly hedges, was lost among the green hills and hedgerows in general, but we found it out, and were glad to look at it again. William left us to seek the waterfalls. . . .

"At our return to the inn, we found new horses and a new driver, and we went on nicely to Hawes, where we arrived before it was quite dark. . . . We rose at six o'clock—a rainy morning. . . . There was a very fine view about a mile from Hawes, where we crossed a bridge; bare and very green fields with cattle, a glittering stream, cottages, a few ill-grown trees, and high hills. The sun shone now. Before we got upon the bare hills, there was a hunting lodge on our right, exactly like Greta Hill, with fir plantations about it. We were very fortunate in the day, gleams of sunshine, passing clouds, that travelled with their shadows below them. Mary was much pleased with Garsdale. It was a dear place to William and me. We noted well the

public house (Garsdale Hall) where we had baited, . . . and afterwards the mountain which had been adorned by Jupiter in his glory when we were here before. It was mid-day when we reached Sedbergh, and market day. We were in the same room where we had spent the evening together in our road to Grasmere. We had a pleasant ride to Kendal, where we arrived at two o'clock. The day favoured us. M. and I went to see the house where dear Sara had lived. . . . I am always glad to see Stavely; it is a place I dearly love to think of—the first mountain village that I came to with William when we first began our pilgrimage together. . . . Nothing particular occurred till we reached Ing's chapel. The door was open, and we went in. It is a neat little place, with a marble floor and marble communion table, with a painting over it of the last supper, and Moses and Aaron on each side. The woman told us that 'they had painted them as near as they could by the dresses as they are described in the Bible,' and gay enough they are. The marble had been sent by Richard Bateman from Leghorn. The woman told us that a man had been at her house a few days before, who told her he had helped to bring it down the Red Sea, and she believed him gladly! . . . We . . . arrived at Grasmere at about six o'clock on Wednesday evening, the 6th of October 1802. . . . I cannot describe what I felt. . . . We went by candle light into the garden, and were astonished at the growth of the brooms, Portugal laurels, &c., &c., &c. The next day, Thursday, we unpacked the boxes. On Friday, 8th, . . . Mary and I walked first upon the hill-side, and then in John's Grove, then in view of Rydal, the first walk that I had taken with my sister.

"*Monday, 11th.*—A beautiful day. We walked to the Easedale hills to hunt waterfalls. William and Mary left me sitting on a stone on the solitary mountains, and went to

Easedale tarn. . . . The approach to the tarn is very beautiful. We expected to have found Coleridge at home, but he did not come till after dinner. He was well, but did not look so.

"*Tuesday, 12th October.*—We walked with Coleridge to Rydal.

"*Wednesday, 13th.*—Set forwards with him towards Keswick, and he prevailed us to go on. We consented, Mrs C. not being at home. The day was delightful. . . .

"*Thursday, 14th.*—We went in the evening to Calvert's. Moonlight. Stayed supper.

"*Saturday, 16th.*—Came home, Mary and I. William returned to Coleridge before we reached Nadel Fell. Mary and I had a pleasant walk. The day was very bright; the people busy getting in their corn. Reached home at about five o'clock. . . .

"*Sunday, 17th.*—We had thirteen of our neighbours to tea. William came in just as we began tea.

"*30th October.*—William is gone to Keswick. Mary went with him to the top of the Raise. She is returned, and is now sitting near me by the fire. It is a breathless, grey day, that leaves the golden woods of autumn quiet in their own tranquillity, stately and beautiful in their decaying. The lake is a perfect mirror.

"*Saturday, 30th October.*—William met Stoddart at the bridge at the foot of Legberthwaite dale. . . . They surprised us by their arrival at four o'clock in the afternoon. . . . After tea, S. read Chaucer to us.

"*Monday, 31st October.*— . . . William and S. went to Keswick. Mary and I walked to the top of the hill and looked at Rydal. I was much affected when I stood upon the second bar of Sara's gate. The lake was perfectly still,

the sun shone on hill and vale, the distant birch trees looked like large golden flowers. Nothing else in colour was distinct and separate, but all the beautiful colours seemed to be melted into one another, and joined together in one mass, so that there were no differences, though an endless variety, when one tried to find it out. The fields were of one sober yellow brown. . . .

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"Tuesday, 2nd November.—William returned from Keswick.

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"Friday, 5th.—. . . I wrote to Montagu, . . . and sent off letters to Miss Lamb and Coleridge.

"Sunday, 7th.—Fine weather. Letters from Coleridge that he was gone to London. Sara at Penrith. I wrote to Mrs Clarkson. William began to translate Ariosto.

"Monday, 8th.—A beautiful day. William got to work again at Ariosto, and so continued all the morning, though the day was so delightful that it made my very heart long to be out of doors, and see and feel the beauty of the autumn in freedom. The trees on the opposite side of the lake are of a yellow brown, but there are one or two trees opposite our windows (an ash tree, for instance) quite green, as in spring. The fields are of their winter colour, but the island is as green as ever it was. . . . William is writing out his stanzas from Ariosto. . . . The evening is quiet. Poor Coleridge! Sara is at Keswick, I hope. . . . I have read one canto of Ariosto to-day.

"24th December.—Christmas Eve. William is now sitting by me, at half-past ten o'clock. I have been . . . repeating some of his sonnets to him, listening to his own repeating, reading some of Milton's, and the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*. It is a quick, keen frost. . . . Coleridge came this morning with Wedgwood. We all turned out . . . one by one, to meet him. He looked well. We had to

tell him of the birth of his little girl, born yesterday morning at six o'clock. William went with them to Wytheburn in the chaise, and M. and I met W. on the Raise. It was not an unpleasant morning. . . . The sun shone now and then, and there was no wind, but all things looked cheerless and distinct; no meltings of sky into mountains, the mountains like stone work wrought up with huge hammers. Last Sunday was as mild a day as I ever remember. . . . Mary and I went round the lakes. There were flowers of various kinds—the topmost bell of a fox-glove, geraniums, daisies, a buttercup in the water (but this I saw two or three days before), small yellow flowers (I do not know their name) in the turf. A large bunch of strawberry blossoms. . . . It is Christmas Day, Saturday, 25th December 1802. I am thirty-one years of age. It is a dull, frosty day.

“ . . . On Thursday, 30th December, I went to Keswick. William rode before me to the foot of the hill nearest K. There we parted close to a little watercourse, which was then noisy with water, but on my return a dry channel. . . . We stopped our horse close to the ledge, opposite a tuft of primroses, three flowers in full blossom and a bud. They reared themselves up among the green moss. We debated long whether we should pluck them, and at last left them to live out their day, which I was right glad of at my return the Sunday following; for there they remained, uninjured either by cold or wet. I stayed at Keswick over New Year's Day, and returned on Sunday, the 2nd January. . . . William was alarmed at my long delay, and came to within three miles of Keswick. . . . Coleridge stayed with us till Tuesday, January 4th. W. and I . . . walked with him to Ambleside. We parted with him at the turning of the lane, he going on horseback to the top of Kirkstone. On Thursday 6th, C. returned, and on Friday, the 7th, he

and Sara went to Keswick. W. accompanied them to the foot of Wytheburn. . . . It was a gentle day, and when William and I returned home just before sunset, it was a heavenly evening. A soft sky was among the hills, and a summer sunshine above, and blending with this sky, for it was more like sky than clouds; the turf looked warm and soft.

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" *Monday, January 10th, 1803.*—I lay in bed to have a drench of sleep till one o'clock. Worked all day. . . . Ominously cold.

" *Tuesday, January 11th.*—A very cold day, . . . but the blackness of the cold made us slow to put forward, and we did not walk at all. Mary read the Prologue to Chaucer's tales to me in the morning. William was working at his poem to C. Letter from Keswick and from Taylor on William's marriage. C. poorly, in bad spirits. . . . Read part of *The Knight's Tale* with exquisite delight. Since tea Mary has been down stairs copying out Italian poems for Stuart. William has been working beside me, and here ends this imperfect summary. . . ."

CHAPTER XVII.

TOUR IN SCOTLAND: JOHN WORDSWORTH.

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH'S *Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland*, A.D. 1803, begins thus: "William and I parted from Mary on Sunday afternoon, August 16, 1803; and William, Coleridge, and I left Keswick on Monday morning." Mrs Wordsworth was unable to accompany them.

Wordsworth in the Fenwick notes said, "Coleridge was at that time in bad spirits, and somewhat too much in love with his own dejection." They started on an Irish car, with a horse that sometimes backed them into ditches, that refused to go on, and had to be led by one of the party; their equipage suggesting some "pedlars astir," or a company of very primitive travellers indeed. It was a jolting uncomfortable car; but what cared they? They wished to get into a new country, into contact with Nature, in her free wild aspects, and to study her amongst solitudes sublimer than those of Cumberland.

A daily record of that delightful journey was kept by Dorothy Wordsworth, and was given to the world some fourteen years ago, under the editorial care of a kindred spirit, the most sympathetic student of Wordsworth that Scotland has known, the late Principal Shairp.* It is quite unnecessary to give any extracts from a book so well known, and so justly prized. Readers of it will see how much more

* See the *Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland*, A.D. 1803, by Dorothy Wordsworth.

finished the daily jottings are than those in the Grasmere Journals of the two previous years. In point of form and style, and literary merit, it is a link between the Dove Cottage and the Continental Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth.

Wordsworth himself, however, memorialized his Scottish tour of 1803 in a series of poems (see vol. ii., pp. 326-379), several of which have a magical charm of their own; while this Journal of his sister has distinct "historic value," as Principal Shairp remarks in his admirable prefatory note. He calls attention to the "absolute sincerity" of the Journal, "the single-minded endeavour to set down precisely the things they saw and heard and felt, while moving on their quiet way." Again, as Principal Shairp says, "it marks the state of Scotland, and the feeling with which the most finely-gifted Englishman came to it seventy years since, at a time before the flood of English interest and 'tourism' had set in across the border." * Coming after Burns' poetry, but before Scott's romances had been written, it has an additional interest. Other things in it, on which the editor very justly remarks, are these: the absence of all effort at fine writing, the perception of the deep interest and dignity that Man gives to Nature, and Nature gives to Man, and the appreciation of aspects of Nature unlike that of the Cumbrian hills and vales; although, as a matter of course, there was special delight in tracing the resemblance of scene to scene—a thing in which almost all travellers rejoice. The sister's Journal must be read as a whole, and must be read along with the brother's poems on the tour, in order that both may be adequately understood. The following is the briefest abstract of the route taken.

First week.—From Keswick they went by Hesketh-New-

* See Preface, p. xxxv.

market, and Rose Castle Carlisle, across Solway Moss to Annan, and Dumfries, to Burns' Grave, then to Ellisland, on by Thornhill, Wanlochhead, and Leadhills to Crawfordjohn, Lanark, and the Falls of Clyde. *Second week.*—To Hamilton, Bothwell, Glasgow, Dumbarton, Loch Lomond, Tarbert, Inversnaid, Loch Katrine, and the Trossachs. *Third week.*—To Arrochar (where Coleridge left them), up Glen Croe to Inveraray, Loch Awe, Kilchurn, by Loch Etive and Loch Linnhe to Ballachullish, through Glencoe to King's House, and Inverorram. *Fourth week.*—To Tyndrum, Killin, Kenmore, by Aberfeldy to Blair Athole, Killicrankie, Dunkeld, and through the Sma' Glen to Crieff and Callander. *Fifth week.*—Again to the Trossachs, Loch Lomond, Rob Roy's Grave, Loch Lubnaig, and by Stirling to Edinburgh, Roslin, and to Peebles. The *Sixth week* (which in some respects was the most interesting of all) closed with a visit to Walter Scott, "the wizard of the north," not yet on his throne of power, but, like Wordsworth himself, in the glorious "morning of his prime."

Coleridge left the Wordsworths at Arrochar in the hope of walking off a fit of gout. In a letter to Sir George Beaumont (September 22, 1803) he said, "I walked 263 miles in eight days, in the hope of forcing the disease into the extremities; and so strong am I that I could undertake at this present time to walk fifty miles a-day for a week together." He added, "I left Wordsworth and his sister at Loch Lomond. I was so ill that I felt myself a burthen on them, and the exercise was too much for me, and yet not enough. I sent my clothes, &c., forward to Edinburgh, and walked myself to Glencoe, and so on as far as Cullen, then back again to Inverness, and thence over that most desolate and houseless country by Aviemore, Dalnacardoch, Dalwhinnie, Tummel Bridge, Kenmore, to Perth, with various digressions and mountain climbings. At the Bridge of the

Sark, which divides England from Scotland, I determined to write to you. At the foot of Loch Ketterin, under the agitation of delight produced by the Trossachs, I began a letter to you, but my fits became so violent and alarming that I was truly incapable of doing more than taking a few notes in my pocket-book. At Fort William, on entering the public house I fell down in an hysterical fit, with long and loud weeping, to my own great metaphysical amusement, and the unutterable consternation and *beboozlement* of the landlord, his wife children, and servants, who all gabbled Gaelic to each other, and sputtered out short-winded English to me in a strange style. So much 'all about myself.' I will send you my whole tour in the course of the ensuing fortnight, in two or three successive letters." *

In writing to Sir George Beaumont, on his return to Grasmere, on the 14th October, Wordsworth said of Coleridge, "I am sure the solitary part of his tour did him the most service."

Two days later, writing to Sir Walter Scott,† he said—

GRASMERE, Oct. 16, 1803.

"We had a delightful journey home, delightful weather, and a sweet country to travel through. We reached our little cottage in high spirits, and thankful to God for all his bounties. My wife and child were both well; and, as I need not say, we had all of us a happy meeting. . . . We passed Branxholme (your Branxholme, we supposed) about four miles on this side of Hawick. It looks better in your poem than in its present realities. The situation, however, is delightful, and makes amends for an ordinary mansion. The whole of the Teviot, and the pastoral steep about Moss-paul, pleased us exceedingly. The Esk, below Langholm, is a

* See *Memorials of Coleorton*, vol. i., p. 8, 9.

† See Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, vol. ii., p. 165.

delicious river, and we saw it to great advantage. We did not omit noticing Johnnie Armstrong's Keep; but his hanging-place, to our great regret, we missed. We were, indeed, most truly sorry that we could not have you along with us into Westmoreland. The country was in its full glory; the verdure of the valleys, in which we are so much superior to you in Scotland, but little tarnished by the weather; and the trees putting on their most beautiful looks. My sister was quite enchanted; and we often said to each other, 'What a pity Mr Scott is not with us!' . . . I had the pleasure of seeing Coleridge and Southey at Keswick last Sunday. Southey, whom I never saw much of before, I liked much. He is very pleasant in his manner, and a man of great reading in old books, poetry, chronicles, memoirs, &c., particularly Spanish and Portuguese. . . . My sister and I often talk of the happy days that we spent in your company. Such things do not occur often in life. If we live, we shall meet again. That is my consolation, when I think of these things. Scotland and England sound like division, do what we can; but we really are but neighbours, and if you were no further off, and in Yorkshire, we should think so. Farewell! God prosper you, and all that belongs to you! Your sincere friend—for such I will call myself, though slow to use a word of such solemn meaning to any one—
W. WORDSWORTH."

The following is a reminiscence by Samuel Rogers of his meeting the Wordsworths and Coleridge in the course of the tour of 1803:—

"Early in the present century, I set out on a tour in Scotland, accompanied by my sister; but an accident which happened to her prevented us from going as far as we had intended. During our excursion we fell in with Wordsworth, Miss Wordsworth, and Coleridge, who were, at the

same time, making a tour in a vehicle that looked very like a cart. Wordsworth and Coleridge were entirely occupied in talking about poetry; and the whole care of looking out for cottages, where they might get refreshment and pass the night, as well as of seeing their poor horse fed and littered, devolved upon Miss Wordsworth. She was a most delightful person—so full of talent, so simple-minded, and so modest! If I am not mistaken, Coleridge proved so impracticable a travelling-companion, that Wordsworth and his sister were at last obliged to separate from him. During that tour they met with Scott. . . .

"I do, indeed, regret that Wordsworth has printed only fragments of his sister's 'Journal'; it is most excellent, and ought to have been published entire. . . . Wordsworth, perhaps, appears to most advantage in a sonnet, because its strict limits prevent him from running into that wordiness to which he is somewhat prone. Don't imagine, from what I have just said, that I mean to disparage Wordsworth: he deserves all his fame." *

In the same *Recollections*, from which this extract is taken, Rogers says:—

"I once read Gray's *Ode to Adversity* to Wordsworth, and at the line—

'And leave us leisure to be good,'

Wordsworth exclaimed, 'I am quite sure *that* is not original; Gray could not have hit upon it,' p. 38.†

From the *Grasmere Journal* of 1800, it will be seen that John Wordsworth, the sailor brother, spent the most of that year at Dove Cottage, "a cherished visitant," who not only

* *Recollections of the Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers*. Second edition, pp. 207-209.

† It occurs in one of the *Odes* of John Oldham,

"And know I have not yet the leisure to be good."

understood his brother's vocation, but was himself "a silent poet." They had seldom met since their school days at Hawkshead. John was only one year and eight months younger than William, who describes his brother in *The Recluse* as

"A never resting Pilgrim of the Sea."

(See p. 251.) Now they were thrown together for months, in the most delightful way. They used to fish in the streams and tarns; or John would take mountain walks with Dorothy, and—in the garden and orchard—spend happy industrious hours, in reading, listening, or working. He had taken with him to sea, as a boy, a genuine love of Nature, and the imaginative second-sight, which marks the poet, was quickened in him during that winter to an unusual degree, while a tie of deep natural affection united the sister to the brothers. It was his intention—after securing a competency at sea—to retire, and settle at Grasmere; not only that he might be near his family, but might devote any surplus means he had to their assistance. He had just been appointed to a post in the vessel *Abergavenny*. The brothers walked—on Michaelmas Day 1800—to Grisdale tarn, and there parted; John going on to Penrith, and William returning to Grasmere. Memorial verses followed, in which John was the central thought. One of the poems, "on the naming of places," tells us of the severe winter that followed John's departure; and when, in spring, the snows dissolved, and William could return to his favourite haunt in the Fir-grove, he found "a hoary pathway traced between the trees,"—a track which, he discovered, had been worn by his brother's feet, pacing there, as he used to do on the deck of his vessel, "unwearied and alone." Henceforward, that particular grove was known in the Wordsworth household as "Brother's Grove" or "John's Grove."

John stayed some time at Penrith, but joined his ship

on a voyage to the East, in the spring of 1801. Before he sailed, he wrote the following words to a friend, on his brother's poems:—

"I do not think that William's poetry will become popular, for some time to come. It does not suit the present taste. I was in company, the other evening, with a gentleman, who had read *The Cumberland Beggar*. 'Why,' says he, 'this is very pretty; but you may call it anything but poetry.' The truth is, few people *read* poetry; they *buy* it for the name, read about twenty lines; and if the language is very fine, they are content with praising the whole. Most of William's poetry *improves upon the second, third, or fourth reading*. Now, people in general are not sufficiently interested to try a second reading."*

In another letter, he said: "The poems will become popular *in time*, but it will be *by degrees*. The fact is, there are not a great many persons that will be pleased with them at first; but, those that are pleased with them, will be pleased *in a high degree*, and they will be *people of sense*: and this will have weight; and *then* people who neither understand, nor wish to understand, them, will praise them."

Again he said: "My brother's poetry has a great deal to struggle against; but I hope it will overcome all: it is certainly *founded upon Nature, and that is the best foundation*."

To his sister he wrote from Portsmouth, on board the *Abergavenny*, April 22, 1801: "We have the finest ship in the fleet: nobody can tell her from a 74-gun ship. The Bengal fleet have sailed with a fine breeze. . . . I thank you for the poems which you have copied for me. I always liked the preface to *Peter Bell*, and would be obliged to you if you could send it to me. . . . As for the *Lyrical Ballads*,

* See *Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 283.

I do not give myself the smallest concern about them. . . . I am certain they must sell. I shall write to you again before we sail."

John Wordsworth went to China, taking with him Anderson's Poets, to read on the voyage. On his return, in 1802, he sent this book down to William at Grasmere, asking him, at the same time, what books he recommended for a new voyage, that would last for sixteen months. In whatever way he had tried to better his fortune during the previous voyage, it had evidently not succeeded; and so he started once more, on what he hoped might be his last voyage. Wordsworth replied (probably in a letter to their brother Richard, with whom John lived in London), "Tell John, when he buys Spenser, to purchase an edition which has his *State of Ireland* in it. This is in prose. Milton's sonnets (transcribe all this for John) I think manly and dignified compositions, distinguished by simplicity and unity of object and aim, and undisfigured by false or vicious ornaments. . . . They have an energetic and varied flow of sound, crowding into narrow room more of the combined effect of rhyme and blank verse, than can be done by any other kind of verse I know of. The sonnets of Milton which I like best are those *To Cyriac Skinner, on his Blindness, Captain or Colonel, Massacre of Piedmont, Cromwell* (except two last lines), *Fairfax, &c.*"

John sailed from England early in 1803, and returned to London towards the close of 1804. This had not been, any more than the last, a commercially successful voyage: but he was now appointed captain of the ship, and—as he had to start again almost immediately—he could not go down to Westmoreland during his short stay in London. The ship, *Abergavenny*, left London in February 1805; but, owing, it was said, to the carelessness of the pilot they had on board, was wrecked off the Bill of Portland, three miles

from shore, and went down, 270 persons perishing with it. An account of the shipwreck, and a letter on her brother's character, from Dorothy Wordsworth to Miss Pollard, will be found in vol. iii., p. 52, of this edition.

A few additional details may be given here. The vessel struck a rock at 5 P.M., but was got afloat at half-past seven. The captain tried to run her on the Weymouth sands, but she was waterlogged, and, in spite of constant pumping, she sank at eleven o'clock. With great prudence, the captain would not allow the long-boat to be sent off, as without her they could not have succeeded in running the ship aground. He remained perfectly calm, and was washed overboard as the vessel sank; and, though an excellent swimmer, he could not battle with the sea, exhausted as he was by six hours of anxiety and toil.

Numerous references to John Wordsworth occur throughout the poems. *The Brothers*, *The Character of the Happy Warrior*, the stanzas on *Peele Castle in a Storm*, one of the poems on *The Daisy*, and the special *Elegiac Stanzas*—either allude to him, or were specially written upon him. The ship went down on the 5th of February, but the body of the captain was not found until the 20th of March.

"Six weeks beneath the moving sea
He lay in slumber quietly,
Unforced by wind or wave
To quit the ship. . . .
And then they found him at her side
And bore him to the grave."

The day after its recovery, the body was interred in the churchyard at Wyke; the funeral arrangements being undertaken by Mr Fowell Buxton of Belfield. There seems to be no monument in the churchyard showing the exact spot where he lies. In Kelly's *Dorset*, there is a statement that "in the graveyard of Wyke Regis are several stones bearing inscriptions to persons shipwrecked on this coast."

The rector of Wyke Regis writes to me that his clerk—who has been long in the parish—reports a tradition that the captain of the *Abergavenny* was buried on the east side of the church porch. Dr Cradock told me that the poet preferred a grave in the churchyard to burial in a church.

As mentioned in vol. iii. of this edition, pp. 50-53, the Wordsworth Society erected a small memorial to John Wordsworth, in 1881, at the parting-place of the brothers, close to Grisdale Tarn.

The following fragments of letters from William Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont, to Richard Sharpe, and others, refer to their common loss:—

“TO SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT, BART.

“GRASMERE, *Feb.* 11, 1805.

“MY DEAR FRIEND—. . . I write to you from a house of mourning. My poor sister, and my wife who loved him almost as we did (for he was one of the most amiable of men), are in miserable affliction, which I do all in my power to alleviate; but Heaven knows I want consolation myself. I can say nothing higher of my ever-dear brother, than that he was worthy of his sister, who is now weeping beside me, and of the friendship of Coleridge; meek, affectionate, silently enthusiastic, loving all quiet things, and a poet in every thing but words.

“We did not love him as a brother merely, but as a man of original mind, and an honour to all about him. Oh! dear friend, forgive me for talking thus. . . . We have had no tidings of Coleridge. I tremble for the moment when he is to hear of my brother's death; it will distress him to the heart, and his poor body cannot bear sorrow. He loved my brother, and he knows how we at Grasmere loved him.—
Your affectionate friend,
W. WORDSWORTH.”

Nine days later he wrote—

“GRASMERE, *Feb.* 20, 1805.

“ . . . Let me again mention my beloved brother. It is now just five years since—after a separation of fourteen years (I may call it a separation, for we only saw him four or five times, and by glimpses)—he came to visit his sister and me in this cottage, and passed eight blessed months with us. He was then waiting for the command of the ship to which he was appointed when he quitted us. As you will have seen, we had little to live upon, and he as little (Lord Lonsdale being then alive). But he encouraged me to persist, and to keep my eye steady on its object. He would work for me (that was his language), for me and his sister; and I was to endeavour to do something for the world. He went to sea, as commander, with this hope; his voyage was very unsuccessful, he having lost by it considerably. When he came home, we chanced to be in London, and saw him. ‘Oh!’ said he, ‘I have thought of you, and nothing but you, if ever of myself, and my bad success, it was only on your account.’ He went again to sea a second time, and also was unsuccessful; still with the same hopes on our account, though then not so necessary, Lord Lowther having paid the money. Lastly came the lamentable voyage, which he entered upon, full of expectation, and love to his sister and myself, and my wife, whom, indeed, he loved with all a brother’s tenderness. This is the end of his part of the agreement—of his efforts for my welfare! God grant me life and strength to fulfil mine! I shall never forget him,—never lose sight of him. There is a bond between us yet, the same as if he were living, nay, far more sacred, calling upon me to do my utmost, as he to the last did his utmost to live in honour and worthiness. . . . He was heard by one of the surviving officers giving orders, with all possible calmness, a very little before the ship went down; and when he could remain at his post

no longer, then, and not till then, he attempted to save himself. I knew this would be so, but it was satisfactory for me to have it confirmed by external evidence. Do not think our grief unreasonable. Of all human beings whom I ever knew, he was the man of the most rational desires, the most sedate habits, and the most perfect self-command. He was modest and gentle, and shy even to disease; but this was wearing off. In every thing his judgments were sound and original; his taste in all the arts—music and poetry in particular (for these he, of course, had had the best opportunities of being familiar with)—was exquisite; and his eye for the beauties of nature was as fine and delicate as ever poet or painter was gifted with, in some discriminations—owing to his education and way of life—far superior to any person's I ever knew. But, alas! what avails it? It was the will of God that he should be taken away.

"I trust in God that I shall not want fortitude; but my loss is great and irreparable.

"Your most affectionate friend,

"W. WORDSWORTH."

Again—

"GRASMERE, *March 12, 1805.*

". . . A thousand times have I asked myself, as your tender sympathy led me to do, 'why was he taken away?' and I have answered the question as you have done. In fact, there is no other answer which can satisfy, and lay the mind at rest. Why have we a choice, and a will, and a notion of justice and injustice, enabling us to be moral agents? Why have we sympathies that make the best of us so afraid of inflicting pain and sorrow, which yet we see dealt about so lavishly by the supreme Governor? Why

uld our notions of right towards each other, and to all stient beings within our influence, differ so widely from nat appears to be his notion and rule, *if every thing were end here?* Would it not be blasphemy to say that, upon he supposition of the thinking principle being *destroyed by death*, however inferior we may be to the great Cause and Ruler of things, we have *more of love* in our nature than He has? The thought is monstrous; and yet, how to get rid of it, except upon the supposition of *another* and a *better world*, I do not see. As to my departed brother, who leads our minds at present to these reflections, he walked all his life, pure among many impure. Except a little hastiness of temper, when anything was done in a clumsy or bungling manner, or when improperly contradicted upon occasions of not much importance, he had not one vice of his profession. I never heard an oath, or even an indelicate expression or allusion, from him in my life. His modesty was equal to that of the purest woman. In prudence, in meekness, in self-denial, in fortitude, in just desires, and elegant and refined enjoyments, with an entire simplicity of manners, life, and habit, he was all that could be wished for in man; strong in health, and of a noble person, with every hope about him that could render life dear; thinking of, and living only for, others—and we see what has been his end! So good must be better; so high must be destined to be higher.

.

“A few minutes before the ship went down, my brother was seen talking with the first mate, with apparent cheerfulness; and he was standing on the hen-coop, which is the point from which he could overlook the whole ship, the moment she went down, dying, as he had lived, in the very place and point where his duty stationed him. I must beg your pardon for detaining you so long on this melancholy

subject; and yet it is not altogether melancholy, for what nobler spectacle can be contemplated than that of a virtuous man with a serene countenance in such an overwhelming situation? . . . He was of a meek and retired nature, loving all quiet things.—I remain, dear Sir George, your most affectionate friend,
W. WORDSWORTH."

The following letter to Southey was written the day after Wordsworth heard of his loss:—

"*Tuesday Evening, GRASMERE, 1805.*

"We see nothing here that does not remind us of our dear brother; there is nothing about us (save the children, whom he had not seen) that he has not known and loved.

"If you could bear to come to this house of mourning to-morrow, I should be for ever thankful. We weep much to-day, and that relieves us. As to fortitude, I hope I shall show that, and that all of us will show it in a proper time, in keeping down many a silent pang hereafter. But grief will, as you say, and must, have its course; there is no wisdom in attempting to check it under the circumstances which we are all of us in here.

"I condole with you, from my soul, on the melancholy account of your own brother's situation; God grant you may not hear such tidings! Oh! it makes the heart groan, that, with such a beautiful world as this to live in, and such a soul as that of man's is by nature and gift of God, that we should go about on such errands as we do, destroying and laying waste; and ninety-nine of us in a hundred never easy in any road that travels towards peace and quietness. And yet, what virtue and what goodness, what heroism and courage, what triumphs of disinterested love everywhere, and human life, after all, what it is! Surely this is not to be for ever, even on this perishable planet! Come to us

to-morrow, if you can; your conversation, I know, will do me good.

"All send best remembrances to you all.—Your affectionate friend,
W. WORDSWORTH."

To Richard Sharpe, in London, he wrote—

"GRASMERE, *March 19, 1805.*

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—You have often been in my thoughts lately, and I have often thought of writing to you, but my heart failed me. No doubt your thoughts, too, must frequently have turned this way. I half hoped you might have learned something concerning the ship, or my brother's conduct, which you might deem consolatory enough to encourage you to write to us. I have now and then, in my distress, turning here and turning there, a thought of this kind; and then I said to myself, what can he write, or what can anybody write to us?

"Poor, blind creatures that we are! how he hoped and struggled, and we hoped and struggled, to procure him this voyage. He wrote to us from Portsmouth, in the highest spirits, and then came those dismal tidings! Oh, my dear friend, no words can express the anguish which we have endured. Our brother was the pride and delight of our hearts: never present to our minds but as an object of hope and pleasure; we had no expectation in life a thousand part so pleasing as that of his coming to live among us the life he loved, and reap the reward of his long privations.

"I will not speak of him now, but if you and I ever see each other again, you will permit me to tell you what he was, and how he loved those that were about me, and what it was his wish to have done for us. I am afraid you will find us much changed when you come again to Grasmere.

My sister has been stricken to the heart, and looks dismally ill; but I hope time will calm us. Let us see you this summer, if possible. We shall make a little tour into Scotland, if we can muster courage; but alas! every plan and scheme at this time only presents to us variety of sorrow. . . .—Your sincere friend,

“W. WORDSWORTH.”

From the following letter to C. W. W. Wynn, it will be seen how Southey felt on hearing of John Wordsworth's death:—

“April 3, 1805.

“DEAR WYNN,—I have been grievously shocked this evening by the loss of the *Abergavenny*, of which Wordsworth's brother was captain. Of course the news came flying up to us from all quarters, and it has disordered me from head to foot. At such circumstances, I believe we feel as much for others as for ourselves; just as a violent blow occasions the same pain as a wound, and he who breaks his shin feels as acutely at the moment as the man whose leg is shot off. In fact, I am writing to you merely because this dreadful shipwreck has left me utterly unable to do anything else. It is the heaviest calamity Wordsworth has ever experienced, and in all probability I shall have to communicate it to him, as he will very likely be here before the tidings can reach him. What renders any near loss of the kind so peculiarly distressing is, that the recollection is perpetually freshened when any like event occurs, by the mere mention of shipwreck, or the sound of the wind. Of all deaths it is the most dreadful, from the circumstances of terror which accompany it. . . . God bless you!

“R. S.”*

* *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*. Edited by Rev. Charles Cuthbert Southey. Vol. ii., p. 321.

It was thus that Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to Mrs Marshall:—

“GRASMERE, *March 16, 1805.*

“... It does me good to weep for him, and it does me good to find that others weep, and I bless them for it. . . . It is with me, when I write, as when I am walking out in this vale, once so full of joy; I can turn to no object that does not remind me of our loss. I see nothing that he would not have loved and enjoyed. . . . My consolations rather come to me in gusts of feeling than are the quiet growth of my mind. I know it will not always be so. The time will come when the light of the setting sun upon these mountain tops will be as heretofore a pure joy; not the same *gladness*, that can never be, but yet a joy even more tender. It will soothe me to know how happy he would have been could he have seen the same beautiful spectacle. . . . He was taken away in the freshness of his manhood: pure he was, and innocent as a child. Never human being was more thoroughly modest, and his courage I need not speak of. He was ‘seen speaking with apparent cheerfulness to the first mate a few minutes before the ship went down;’ and when nothing more could be done, he said, ‘the will of God be done.’ I have no doubt when he felt that it was out of his power to save his life he was as calm as before, if some thought of what we should endure did not awaken a pang. . . . He loved solitude, and he rejoiced in society. He would wander alone amongst these hills with his fishing-rod, or led on by the mere pleasure of walking, for many hours; or he would walk with W. or me, or both of us, and was continually pointing out—with a gladness which is seldom seen but in very young people—something which perhaps would have escaped our observation; for he had so fine an eye that no distinction was unnoticed by him, and so tender a feeling that he never noticed

anything in vain. Many a time has he called out to me at evening to look at the moon or stars, or a cloudy sky, or this vale in the quiet moonlight; but the stars and moon were his chief delight. He made of them his companions when at sea, and was never tired of those thoughts which the silence of the night fed in him. Then he was so happy by the fireside. Any little business of the house interested him. He loved our cottage. He helped us to furnish it, and to make the garden. Trees are growing now which he planted. . . . He stayed with us till the 29th of September, having come to us about the end of January. During that time Mary Hutchinson, now Mary Wordsworth, stayed with us six weeks. John used to walk with her everywhere, and they were exceedingly attached to each other; and so my poor sister mourns with us, not merely because we have lost one who was so dear to William and me, but from tender love to John and an intimate knowledge of him. Her hopes as well as ours were fixed on John. . . . I can think of nothing but of our departed brother, yet I am very tranquil to-day. I honour him, and love him, and glory in his memory. . . ."

CHAPTER XVIII

FRAGMENTS OF VERSE: CORRESPONDENCE.

NUMEROUS fragments of verse, more or less unfinished, occur in the Grasmère Journals, written by Dorothy Wordsworth. One of these, which is broken up into irregular fragments, and very incomplete, is evidently part of the material which was written about the old Cumbrian shepherd Michael, the successive alterations of which are so faithfully recorded elsewhere in the Journal (see pp. 274-278, and compare vol. ii., p. 144). It has a special topographical interest, from its description of Helvellyn and its spring, the fountain of the mists, and the stones on the summit. On other grounds there is much in this fragment that gives it a title to rank with the published poem of *Michael*, and passages in *The Excursion* and *The Prelude*. On the outside leather cover of the MS. book there is written, "May to Dec. 1802."

The following lines come first:—

"There is a shapeless crowd of unhewn stones
That lie together, some in heaps, and some
In lines, that seem to keep themselves alive
In the last dotage of a dying form.
At least so seems it to a man who stands
In such a lonely place."

These are followed by a few lines, some of which were afterwards used in *The Prelude* (see book vii., vol. iii., p. 280):—

"Shall he who gives his days to low pursuits,
Amid the undistinguishable crowd
Of cities, 'mid the same eternal flow

Of the same objects, melted and reduced
 To one identity, by differences
 That have no law, no meaning, and no end,
 Shall he feel yearning to those lifeless forms,
 And shall we think that Nature is less kind
 To those, who all day long, through a long life,
 Have walked within her sight? It cannot be.

Mary Wordsworth, Dorothy Wordsworth, William
 Wordsworth.

Sat. Eve., 20 past 6, May 29."

Other fragments follow less worthy of preservation. Then the passage, which occurs in the xiii. book of *The Prelude*, beginning—

"There are who think that strong affection, love,"

(see vol. vii., p. 382), with one or two variations from the final text, which were not improvements.

Five lines on Helvellyn, afterwards included in the *Musings near Aquapendente* (see vol. viii., p. 36), come next.

The fragments referring to Michael are written down, probably just as the brother dictated them to his sister, and would be—if not unintelligible—certainly without any literary connection or unity, were they printed in the order in which they occur. I have, therefore, slightly transposed them to give something like continuity to the whole. It remains, of course, a torso. He says—

"I will relate a tale for those who love
 To lie beside the lonely mountain brooks,
 And hear the voices of the winds and flowers.

. It befell
 At the first falling of the autumnal snows,
 Old Michael and his son one day went forth
 In search of a stray sheep. It was the time
 When from the heights our shepherds drive their flocks

To gather all their mountain family
 Into the homestalls, ere they send them back
 There to defend themselves the winter long.
 Old Michael for this purpose had driven down
 His flock into the vale, but as it chanced,
 A single sheep was wanting. They had sought
 The straggler during all the previous day
 All over their own pastures, and beyond.
 And now at sunrise, sallying forth again,
 Far did they go that morning : with their search
 Beginning towards the south, where from Dove Crag
 (Ill home for bird so gentle), they looked down
 On Deep-dale-head, and Brother's water (named
 From those two Brothers that were drowned therein) ;
 Thence northward did they pass by Arthur's seat,
 And Fairfield's highest summit, on the right
 Leaving St Sunday's Crag, to Grisdale tarn
 They shot, and over that cloud-loving hill,
 Seat-Sandal, a fond lover of the clouds ;
 Thence up Helvellyn, a superior mount,
 With prospect underneath of Striding edge,
 And Grisdale's houseless vale, along the brink
 Of sheep-cot-cove, and those two other coves,
 Huge skeletons of crags which from the coast
 Of old Helvellyn spread their arms abroad
 And make a stormy harbour for the winds.
 Far went these shepherds in their devious quest,
 From mountain ridges peeping as they passed
 Down into every nook ; . . .
 and many a sheep
 On height or bottom * did they see, in flocks
 Or single. And although it needs must seem
 Hard to believe, yet could they well discern

* Bottom is a common Cumbrian word for valley.

Even at the utmost distance of two miles,
(Such strength of vision to the shepherd's eye
Doth practice give), that neither in the flocks
Nor in the single sheep was what they sought.
So to Helvellyn's eastern side they went,
Down looking on that hollow, where the pool
Of Thirlmere flashes like a warrior's shield
His light high up among the gloomy rocks,
With sight of now and then a straggling gleam
On Armath's* pleasant fields. And now they came,
To that high spring which bears no human name,
As one unknown by others, aptly called
The fountain of the mists. The father stooped
To drink of the clear water, laid himself
Flat on the ground, even as a boy might do,
To drink of the cold well. When in like sort
His son had drunk, the old man said to him
That now he might be proud, for he that day
Had slaked his thirst out of a famous well,
The highest fountain known on British land.
Thence, journeying on a second time, they passed
Those small flat stones, which, ranged by traveller's hands
In cyphers on Helvellyn's highest ridge,
Lie loose on the bare turf, some half-o'ergrown
By the grey moss, but not a single stone
Unsettled by a wanton blow from foot
Of shepherd, man or boy. They have respect
For strangers who have travelled far perhaps,
For men who in such places, feeling there
The grandeur of the earth, have left inscribed
Their epitaph, which rain and snow
And the strong wind have revered.

* Armboth, on the western side of Thirlmere.

Though often thus industriously they passed
 Whole hours with but small interchange of speech,
 Yet were there times in which they did not want
 Discourse both wise and pleasant, shrewd remarks
 Of moral prudence, clothed in images
 Lively and beautiful, in rural forms,
 That made their conversation fresh and fair
 As is a landscape; and the shepherd oft
 Would draw out of his heart the mysteries
 And admirations that were there, of God
 And of his works: or, yielding to the bent
 Of his peculiar humour, would let loose
 His tongue, and give it the wind's freedom; then,
 Discoursing in remote imaginations, strong
 Conceits, devices, plans, and schemes,
 Of alterations human hands might make
 Among the mountains, fens which might be drained,
 Mines opened, forests planted, and rocks split,
 The fancies of a solitary man." *

Then follow four pages of Miss Wordsworth's Journal (May 4th and 5th, 1802); and then, irregularly written, and with numerous erasures, the remainder of these unpublished lines.

* All doubt as to these fragments being originally intended to form part of *Michael* is set at rest by a letter from Wordsworth to Thomas Poole, of Nether Stowey, written from Grasmere on the 9th of April 1801, in which he gives first some new lines to be added to *Michael*, at pp. 210 and 211 of vol. ii. of the *Lyrical Ballads* (ed. 1800); to which letter Dorothy Wordsworth added the postscript, "My brother has written the following lines, to be inserted page 206, after the ninth line—

'Murmur with the sound of summer flies;'"

and then follow—

"Though in these occupations they would pass
 Whole hours," &c.,

as printed above, with only one or two variations of text.

“ At length the boy
Said, ‘ Father ’tis lost labour ; with your leave
I will go back and range a second time
The grounds which we have hunted through before.’
So saying, homeward, down the hill the boy
Sprang like a gust of wind : [* and with a heart
Brimful of glory said within himself,
‘ I know where I shall find him, though the storm
Have driven him twenty miles.’
For ye must know] that though the storm
Drive one of those poor creatures miles and miles,
If he can crawl, he will return again
To his own hills, the spots where when a lamb
He learned to pasture at his mother’s side.
Bethinking him of this, again the boy
Pursued his way toward a brook, whose course
Was through that unfenced track of mountain ground
Which to his father’s little farm belonged,
The home and ancient birthright of their flock.
Down the deep channel of the stream he went,
Prying through every nook. Meanwhile the rain
Began to fall upon the mountain tops,
Thick storm, and heavy, which for three hours’ space
Abated not ; and all that time the boy
Was busy in his search, until at length
He spied the sheep upon a plot of grass,
An island in the brook. It was a place
Remote and deep, piled round with rocks, where foot
Of man or beast was seldom used to tread.
But now, when everywhere the summer grass
Began to fail, this sheep by hunger pressed

* Erased version.

Had left his fellows, made his way alone
 To the green plot of pasture in the brook.
 Before the boy knew well what he had seen
 He leapt upon the island, with proud heart,
 And with a shepherd's joy. Immediately
 The sheep sprang forward to the further shore,
 And was borne headlong by the roaring flood.
 At this the boy looked round him, and his heart
 Fainted with fear. Thrice did he turn his face
 To either bank, nor could he summon up
 The courage that was needful to leap back
 'Cross the tempestuous torrent ; so he stood
 A prisoner on the island, not without
 More than one thought of death, and his last hour.
 Meantime the father had returned alone
 To his own home, and now at the approach
 Of evening he went forth to meet his son,
 Nor could he guess the cause for which the boy
 Had stayed so long. The shepherd took his way
 Up his own mountain grounds, where, as he walked
 Along the steep that overhung the brook,
 He seemed to hear a voice, which was again
 Repeated, like the whistling of a kite.
 At this, not knowing why—as often-times
 The old man afterwards was heard to say—
 Down to the brook he went, and tracked its course
 Upwards among the o'erhanging rocks ; nor
 Had he gone far ere he espied the boy
 Right in the middle of the roaring stream.
 Without distress or fear the shepherd heard
 The outcry of his son : he stretched his staff
 Towards him, bade him leap, which word scarce said
 The boy was safe."

.

Of Michael again it is said—

“ No doubt if you in terms direct had asked
 Whether he loved the mountains, true it is
 That with blunt repetition of your words
 He might have stared at you, and said that they
 Were frightful to behold, but had you then
 Discoursed with him
 Of his own business, and the goings on
 Of earth and sky, then truly had you seen
 That in his thoughts there were obscurities,
 Wonder, and admiration, things that wrought
 Not less than a religion in his heart.
 And if it was his fortune to converse
 With any who could talk of common things
 In an unusual way, and give to them
 Unusual aspects, or by questions apt
 Wake sudden recognitions, that were like
 Creations in the mind (and were indeed
 Creations often), then when he discoursed
 Of mountain sights, this untaught shepherd stood
 Before the man with whom he so conversed
 And looked at him as with a poet's eye.
 But speaking of the vale in which he dwelt,
 And those bare rocks, if you had asked if he
 For other pastures would exchange the same
 And dwell elsewhere,
 you then had seen
 At once what spirit of love was in his heart.”

There are also written in this MS. book some of the stanzas of *Ruth* (see vol. ii., p. 187), with a few variations of text, and the hitherto unpublished stanza from the same poem. Thereafter the Grasmere Journal is resumed.

The following fragments are also extracted from the miscellaneous jottings of these Journals :—

“ Along the mazes of this song I go
As inward motions of the wandering thought
Lead me, or outward circumstance impels.
Thus do I urge a never-ending way
Year after year, with many a sleep between,
Through joy and sorrow ; if my lot be joy
More joyful if it be with sorrow sooth'd.”

“ The rains at length have ceas'd, the winds are still'd,
The stars shine brightly between clouds at rest,
And as a cavern is with darkness fill'd,
The vale is by a mighty sound possess'd.”

“ Witness thou
The dear companion of my lonely walk,
My hope, my joy, my sister, and my friend,
Or something dearer still, if reason knows
A dearer thought, or in the heart of love
There be a dearer name.”

The following has a later date, but may be given here :—

TO THE EVENING STAR OVER GRASMERE WATER, JULY 1806.

“ The Lake is thine,
The mountains too are thine, some clouds there are,
Some little feeble stars, but all is thine,
Thou, thou art king, and sole proprietor.

A moon among her stars, a mighty vale,
Fresh as the freshest field, scoop'd out, and green
As is the greenest billow of the sea.

The multitude of little rocky hills,
Rocky or green, that do like islands rise
From the flat meadow lonely there."

In Miss Wordsworth's Journal mention is made (p. 322) of a letter received from John Wilson, and of her brother's reply to it. This letter is interesting as one of the very earliest appreciative notices of the *Lyrical Ballads*. It does honour to Wilson's insight and sympathy,—he was only seventeen years of age at the time—and it is altogether too memorable to be omitted from Wordsworth's life.*

"MY DEAR SIR,—You may perhaps be surprised to see yourself addressed in this manner by one who never had the happiness of being in company with you, and whose knowledge of your character is drawn solely from the perusal of your poems. But, sir, though I am not personally acquainted with you, I may almost venture to affirm that the qualities of your soul are not unknown to me. In your poems I discovered such marks of delicate feeling, such benevolence of disposition, and such knowledge of human nature, as made an impression on my mind that nothing will ever efface; and while I felt my soul refined by the sentiments contained in them, and filled with those delightful emotions which it would be almost impossible to describe, I entertained for you an attachment made up of love and admiration. Reflection upon that delight which I enjoyed from reading your poems, will ever make me regard you with gratitude; and the consciousness of feeling those emotions you delineate makes me proud to regard your character with esteem and admiration. . . . To receive a letter from you would afford me more happiness than any occurrence in this world, save the happiness of my friends,

* See *Christopher North: a Memoir of John Wilson*. Compiled by Mrs Gordon. Vol. i., chap. ii., pp. 39-45.

and greatly enhance the pleasure I receive from reading your *Lyrical Ballads*. . . . To you, sir, mankind are indebted for a species of poetry, which will continue to afford pleasure while respect is paid to virtuous feelings, and while sensibility continues to pour forth tears of rapture. The flimsy ornaments of language, used to conceal meanness of thought and want of feeling, may for a short time captivate the ignorant and unwary ; but true taste will discover the imposture, and expose the authors of it to merited contempt. The real feelings of human nature, expressed in simple and forcible language, will, on the contrary, please those only who are capable of entertaining them, and in proportion to the attention which we pay to the faithful delineation of such feelings, will be the enjoyment derived from them. That poetry, therefore, which is the language of nature, is certain of immortality, provided circumstances do not occur to pervert the feelings of humanity, and occasion a complete revolution in the government of the mind.

That your poetry is the language of Nature, in my opinion admits of no doubt. Both the thoughts and expressions may be tried by that standard. You have seized upon those feelings that most deeply interest the heart, and that also come within the sphere of common observation. You do not write merely for the pleasure of philosophers and men of improved taste, but for all who think, for all who feel. If we have ever known the happiness arising from parental or fraternal love ; if we have ever known that delightful sympathy of soul connecting persons of different sex ; if we have ever dropped a tear at the death of friends, or grieved for the misfortunes of others ; if, in short, we have ever felt the more amiable emotions of human nature, it is impossible to read *your* poems without being greatly interested, and frequently in raptures. Your sentiments,

feelings, and thoughts are therefore exactly such as ought ~~to~~ to constitute the subject of poetry, and cannot fail of exciting interest in every heart. But, sir, your merit does not ~~solely~~ consist in delineating the real features of the human mind under those different aspects it assumes when under the influence of various passions and feelings; you have, in a manner truly admirable, explained a circumstance, very important in its effects upon the soul when agitated, that has indeed been frequently alluded to, but never generally adopted by any author in tracing the progress of emotions—I mean that wonderful effect which the appearances of external nature have upon the mind when in a state of strong feeling. We must all have been sensible that, when under the influence of *grief*, Nature, when arrayed in her gayest attire, appears to us dull and gloomy, and that, when our hearts bound with joy, her most deformed prospects seldom fail of pleasing. This disposition of the mind to assimilate the appearances of external Nature to its own situation, is a fine subject for poetical allusion, and in several poems you have employed it with a most electrifying effect. But you have not stopped *here*, you have shown the effect which the qualities of external nature have in forming the human mind, and have presented us with several characters whose particular bias arose from that situation in which they were planted with respect to the scenery of nature. This idea is inexpressibly beautiful, and though, I confess, that to me it appeared to border upon fiction when I first considered it, yet at this moment I am convinced of its foundation in Nature, and its great importance in accounting for various phenomena in the human mind. It serves to explain those diversities in the structure of the mind, which have baffled all the ingenuity of philosophers to account for. It serves to overturn the theories of men who have attempted to write on human nature without a knowledge of the causes that

fect it, and who have discovered greater eagerness to show their own subtlety than arrive at the acquisition of truth. May not the face of external nature through different quarters of the globe account for the dispositions of different nations? May not mountains, forests, plains, groves, and lakes, as much as the temperature of the atmosphere, or the form of government, produce important effects upon the human soul; and may not the difference subsisting between the former of these in different countries produce as much diversity among the inhabitants as any varieties among the latter? The effect you have shown to take place in particular cases so much to my satisfaction, most certainly may be extended so far as to authorise general inferences. This idea has no doubt struck you; and I trust that, if it be founded on Nature, your mind, so long accustomed to philosophical investigation, will perceive how far it may be carried, and what consequences are likely to result from it.

Your poems, sir, are of very great advantage to the world, from containing in them a system of philosophy that regards one of the most curious subjects of investigation, and, at the same time, one of the most important. But your poems may not be considered merely in a philosophical light, or even as containing refined and natural feelings; they present us with a body of morality of the purest kind. They represent the enjoyment resulting from the cultivation of the social affections of our nature; they inculcate a conscientious regard to the rights of our fellow-men; they show that every creature on the face of the earth is entitled in some measure to our kindness. They prove that in every mind, *however* depraved, there exist some qualities deserving our esteem. They point out the proper way to happiness. They show that such a thing as perfect misery does not exist. They flash on our souls convictions of immortality.

Considered, therefore, in this view, *Lyrical Ballads* is, to use your own words, the book which I value next to my Bible; and though I may, perhaps, never have the happiness of seeing you, yet I will always consider you as a friend, who has, by his instructions, done me a service which it never can be in my power to repay. Your instructions have afforded me inexpressible pleasure; it will be my own fault if I do not reap from them much advantage.

I have said, sir, that in all your poems you have adhered strictly to natural feelings, and described what comes within the range of every person's observation. It is from following out this plan that, in my estimation, you have surpassed every poet both of ancient and modern times. But to me it appears that in the execution of this design you have inadvertently fallen into an error, the effects of which are, however, exceedingly trivial. No feeling, no state of mind ought, in my opinion, to become the subject of poetry, that does not please. Pleasure may, indeed, be produced in many ways, and by means that at first sight appear calculated to accomplish a very different end. Tragedy of the deepest kind produces pleasure of a high nature. To point out the causes of this would be foreign to the purpose.

But we may lay this down as a general rule, that no description can please where the sympathies of our soul are not excited, and no narration interest where we do not enter into the feelings of some of the parties concerned. On this principle, many feelings which are undoubtedly natural, are improper subjects of poetry, and many situations, no less natural, incapable of being described so as to produce the grand effect of poetical composition. This, sir, I would apprehend, is reasonable, and founded on the constitution of the human mind. There are a thousand occurrences happening every day which do not in the least interest an unconcerned spectator, though they no doubt occasion various

emotions in the breast of those to whom they immediately relate. To describe these in poetry would be improper.

Now, sir, I think that in several cases you have fallen into this error. You have described feelings with which I cannot sympathize, and situations in which I take no interest. I know that I can relish your beauties, and that makes me think that I can also perceive your faults. But in this matter I have not trusted wholly to my own judgment, but heard the sentiments of men whose feelings I admired, and whose understanding I respected. In a few cases, then, I think that even you have failed to excite interest. In the poem entitled 'The Idiot Boy,' your intention, as you inform us in your preface, was to trace the maternal passion through its more subtle windings. This design is no doubt accompanied with much difficulty, but, if properly executed, cannot fail of interesting the heart. But, sir, in my opinion, the manner in which you have executed this plan has frustrated the end you intended to produce by it; the affection of Betty Foy has nothing in it to excite interest. It exhibits merely the effects of that instinctive feeling inherent in the constitution of every animal. The excessive fondness of the mother disgusts us, and prevents us from sympathizing with her. We are unable to enter into her feelings; we cannot conceive ourselves actuated by the same feelings, and consequently take little or no interest in her situation. The object of her affection is indeed her son, and in that relation much consists, but then he is represented as totally destitute of any attachment towards her; the state of his mind is represented as perfectly deplorable, and, in short, to me it appears almost unnatural, that a person in a state of complete idiotism should excite the warmest feelings of attachment in the breast even of his mother. This much I know, that among all the people ever I knew to have read this poem, I never met one who did not rise rather displeased

from the perusal of it, and the only cause I could assign for it was the one now mentioned. This inability to receive pleasure from descriptions such as that of 'The Idiot Boy' is, I am convinced, founded upon established feelings of human nature, and the principle of it constitutes, as I daresay you recollect, the leading feature of Smith's theory of moral sentiments. I therefore think that in the choice of this subject you have committed an error.

You never deviate from nature; in you that would be impossible; but in this case you have delineated feelings which, though natural, do not please, but which create a certain degree of disgust and contempt. With regard to the manner in which you have executed your plan, I think too great praise cannot be bestowed upon your talents. You have most admirably delineated the idiotism of the boy's mind, and the situations in which you place him are perfectly calculated to display it. The various thoughts that pass through the mother's mind are highly descriptive of her foolish fondness, her extravagant fears, and her ardent hopes. The manner in which you show how bodily sufferings are frequently removed by mental anxieties or pleasures, in the description of the cure of Betty Foy's female friend, is excessively well managed, and serves to establish a very curious and important truth. In short, everything you proposed to execute has been executed in a masterly manner. The fault, if there be one, lies in the plan, not in the execution. This poem we heard recommended as one in your best manner, and accordingly it is frequently read in this belief. The judgment formed of it is, consequently, erroneous. Many people are displeased with the performance; but they are not careful to distinguish faults in the plan from faults in the execution, and the consequence is that they form an improper opinion of your genius. In reading any composition, most certainly the pleasure we

receive arises almost wholly from the sentiment, thoughts, and descriptions contained in it. A secondary pleasure arises from admiration of those talents requisite to the production of it. In reading 'The Idiot Boy,' all persons who allow themselves to think must admire your talents, but they regret that they have been so employed, and while they esteem the author, they cannot help being displeased with his performance. I have seen a most excellent painting of an idiot, but it created in me inexpressible disgust. I admired the talents of the artist, but I had no other source of pleasure. The poem of 'The Idiot Boy' produced upon me an effect in every respect similar. I find that my remarks upon several of your other poems must be reserved for another letter. If you think this one deserves an answer, a letter from Wordsworth would be to me a treasure. If your silence tells me that my letter was beneath your notice, you will never again be troubled by one whom you consider as an ignorant admirer. But, if your mind be as amiable as it is reflected in your poems, you will make allowance for defects that age may supply, and make a fellow-creature happy by dedicating a few moments to the instruction of an admirer and sincere friend.

JOHN WILSON."

" PROFESSOR JARDINE'S COLLEGE, GLASGOW,
24th May 1802.

" WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, Esq.,
Ambleside, Westmoreland, England."

Wordsworth received this letter on the 31st of May; and, as we find from his sister's Journal, he began a reply to it on the 5th June. "Next day," she adds, "we were writing the letter to John Wilson," from which it seems to have been a joint production. This reply to Wilson is evidently the letter with which the late Bishop

of Lincoln concluded the eighteenth chapter of his uncle's *Memoirs*. The Bishop did not indicate to whom the letter was addressed; but the internal evidence is unmistakable.

"MY DEAR SIR,—Had it not been for a very amiable modesty you could not have imagined that your letter could give me any offence. It was on many accounts highly grateful to me. I was pleased to find that I had given so much pleasure to an ingenuous and able mind, and I further considered the enjoyment which you had had from my Poems as an earnest that others might be delighted with them in the same or a like manner. It is plain from your letter that the pleasure which I have given you has not been blind or unthinking; you have studied the poems, and prove that you have entered into the spirit of them. They have not given you a cheap or vulgar pleasure; therefore I feel that you are entitled to my kindest thanks for having done some violence to your natural diffidence in the communication which you have made to me.

There is scarcely any part of your letter that does not deserve particular notice; but partly from some constitutional infirmities, and partly from certain habits of mind, I do not write any letters unless upon business, not even to my dearest friends. Except during absence from my own family I have not written five letters of friendship during the last five years. I have mentioned this in order that I may retain your good opinion, should my letter be less minute than you are entitled to expect. You seem to be desirous of my opinion on the influence of natural objects in forming the character of Nations. This cannot be understood without first considering their influence upon men in general, first, with reference to such objects as are common to all countries; and, next, such as belong ex-

clusively to any particular country, or in a greater degree to it than to another. Now it is manifest that no human being can be so besotted and debased by oppression, penury, or any other evil which inhumanises man, as to be utterly insensible to the colours, forms, or smell of flowers, the [voices*] and motions of birds and beasts, the appearances of the sky and heavenly bodies, the genial warmth of a fine day, the terror and uncomfortableness of a storm, &c., &c. How dead soever many full-grown men may outwardly seem to these things, all are more or less affected by them; and in childhood, in the first practice and exercise of their senses, they must have been not the nourishers merely, but often the fathers of their passions. There cannot be a doubt that in tracts of country where images of danger, melancholy, grandeur, or loveliness, softness, and ease prevail, that they will make themselves felt powerfully in forming the characters of the people, so as to produce an uniformity of national character, where the nation is small and is not made up of men who, inhabiting different soils, climates, &c., by their civil usages and relations materially interfere with each other. It was so formerly, no doubt, in the Highlands of Scotland; but we cannot perhaps observe much of it in our own island at the present day, because, even in the most sequestered places, by manufactures, traffic, religion, law, interchange of inhabitants, &c., distinctions are done away, which would otherwise have been strong and obvious. This complex state of society does not, however, prevent the characters of individuals from frequently receiving a strong bias, not merely from the impressions of general nature, but also from local objects and images. But it seems that to produce these effects, in the degree in which we frequently find them to be

* Parts of this letter have been torn, and words have been lost; some of which were conjecturally supplied by the poet's nephew, and are printed between brackets.

produced, there must be a peculiar sensibility of original organisation combining with moral accidents, as is exhibited in *The Brothers* and in *Ruth*. I mean, to produce this in a marked degree; not that I believe that any man was ever brought up in the country without loving it, especially in his better moments, or in a district of particular grandeur or beauty without feeling some stronger attachment to it on that account than he would otherwise have felt. I include, you will observe, in these considerations, the influence of climate, changes in the atmosphere and elements, and the labours and occupations which particular districts require.

✓ You begin what you say upon the *Idiot Boy*, with this observation, that nothing is a fit subject for poetry which does not please. But here follows a question, Does not please whom? Some have little knowledge of natural imagery of any kind, and, of course, little relish for it; some are disgusted with the very mention of the words pastoral poetry, sheep or shepherds. Some cannot tolerate a poem with a ghost or any supernatural agency in it; others would shrink from an animated description of the pleasures of love, as from a thing carnal and libidinous. Some cannot bear to see delicate and refined feelings ascribed to men in low conditions in society, because their vanity and self-love tell them that these belong only to themselves, and men like themselves in dress, station, and way of life; others are disgusted with the naked language of some of the most interesting passions of men, because either it is indelicate, or gross, or vulgar. Many fine ladies could not bear certain expressions in *The Mother* and *The Thorn*, and, as in the instance of Adam Smith,—who, we are told, could not endure the ballad of *Clym of the Clough*,—because the author had not written like a gentleman. Then there are professional and national prejudices for evermore. Some take no interest in the description of a particular passion or

quality, as love of solitariness, we will say, genial activity of fancy, love of nature, religion, and so forth, because they have [little or] nothing of it in themselves; and so on without end. I return then to [the] question; 'Please whom? or what? I answer, Human Nature as it has been [and ever] will be. But, where are we to find the best measure of this? I answer, from within; by stripping our own hearts naked, and by looking out of ourselves to those men who lead the simplest lives, and most according to Nature; men who have never known false refinements, wayward and artificial desires, false criticisms, effeminate habits of thinking and feeling or who, having known these things, have outgrown them. This latter class is the most to be depended upon, but it is very small in number.

People in our rank in life are perpetually falling into one sad mistake, namely, that of supposing that Human Nature and the persons they associate with are one and the same thing. Whom do we generally associate with? Gentlemen, persons of fortune, professional men, ladies, persons who can afford to buy, or can easily procure books of half-a-guinea price, hot-pressed, and printed upon superfine paper. These persons are, it is true, a part of Human Nature, but we err lamentably if we suppose them to be fair representatives of the vast mass of human existence. And yet few ever consider books but with reference to their power of pleasing these persons, and men of a higher rank; few descend lower, among cottages and fields, and among children. A man must have done this habitually before his judgment upon *The Idiot Boy* would be in any way decisive with me. I *know* I have done this myself habitually; I wrote the poem with exceeding delight and pleasure, and whenever I read it I read it with pleasure. You have given me praise for having reflected faithfully in my poems the feelings of human nature. I would fain

hope that I have done so. But a great Poet ought to do more than this; he ought, to a certain degree, to rectify men's feelings, to give them new compositions of feeling, to render their feelings more sane, pure, and permanent, in short, more consonant to Nature, that is, to Eternal Nature, and the great moving spirit of things. He ought to travel before men occasionally, as well as at their sides. I may illustrate this by a reference to natural objects. What false notions have prevailed from generation to generation of the true character of the nightingale. As far as my Friend's poem, in the *Lyrical Ballads*, is read, it will contribute greatly to rectify these. You will recollect a passage in Cowper, where, speaking of rural sounds, he says,

And even the boding Owl
That hails the rising moon has charms for me.

Cowper was passionately fond of natural objects, yet you see he mentions it as a marvellous thing that he could connect pleasure with the cry of the owl. In the same poem he speaks in the same manner of that beautiful plant, the gorse; making in some degree an amiable boast of his loving it, '*unsightly*' and unsmooth as it is. There are many aversions of this kind, which, though they may have some foundation in nature, have yet so slight a one, that—though they may have prevailed hundreds of years—a philosopher will look upon them as accidents. So with respect to many moral feelings, either of love or dislike. What excessive admiration was paid in former times to personal prowess and military success; it is so with the latter even at the present day, but surely not nearly so much as heretofore. So with regard to birth, and innumerable other modes of sentiment, civil and religious. But you will be inclined to ask by this time how all this applies to *The Idiot Boy*. To this

I can only say that the loathing and disgust which many people have at the sight of an idiot, is a feeling which, though having some foundation in human nature, is not necessarily attached to it in any virtuous degree, but is owing in a great measure to a false delicacy, and, if I may say it without rudeness, a certain want of comprehensiveness of thinking and feeling. Persons in the lower classes of society have little or nothing of this. If an idiot is born in a poor man's house, it must be taken care of, and cannot be boarded out as it would be by gentlefolks, or sent to a public or private receptacle for such unfortunate beings.

I have often applied to idiots, in my own mind, that sublime expression of scripture that '*their life is hidden with God.*' They are worshipped, probably from a feeling of this sort, in several parts of the East. Among the Alps, where they are numerous, they are considered, I believe, as a blessing to the family to which they belong. I have, indeed, often looked upon the conduct of fathers and mothers of the lower classes of society toward idiots as a great triumph of the human heart. It is there that we see the strength, disinterestedness, and grandeur of love; nor have I ever been able to contemplate an object that calls out so many excellent and virtuous sentiments without finding it hallowed thereby, and having something in me which bears down before it, like a deluge, every feeble sensation of disgust and aversion.

There are, in my opinion, several important mistakes in the latter part of your letter. These refer both to the Boy and the Mother. I must content myself simply with observing that it is probable that the principal cause of your dislike to this particular poem lies in the word *Idiot*. If there had been any such word in our language to which we had attached passion, as lack-wit, half-wit, witless, &c., I should have certainly employed

it in preference ; but there is no such word. Observe (this is entirely in reference to this particular poem), my *Idiot* is not one of those who cannot articulate :

*Whether in cunning or in joy,
And then his words were not a few, &c.*

and the last speech at the end of the poem. The 'Boy' whom I had in my mind was by no means disgusting in his appearance, quite the contrary ; and I have known several with imperfect faculties, who are handsome in their persons and features. There is one, at present, within a mile of my own house, remarkably so, though [he has something] of a stare and vacancy in his countenance. A friend of mine, knowing that some persons had a dislike to the poem, such as you have expressed, advised me to add a stanza, describing the person of the Boy [so as] entirely to separate him in the imagination of my readers from that class of idiots who are disgusting in their persons ; but the narration in the poem is so rapid and impassioned, that I could not find a place in which to insert the stanza without checking the progress of it, and [so leaving] a deadness upon the feeling. This poem has, I know, frequently produced the same effect as it did upon you, and your friends ; but there are many also to whom it affords exquisite delight, and who, indeed, prefer it to any other of my poems. This proves that the feelings there delineated are such as men *may* sympathise with. This is enough for my purpose. It is not enough for me as a Poet, to delineate merely such feelings as all men *do* sympathise with ; but it is also highly desirable to add to these others, such as all men *may* sympathise with, and such as there is reason to believe they would be better and more moral beings if they did sympathize.

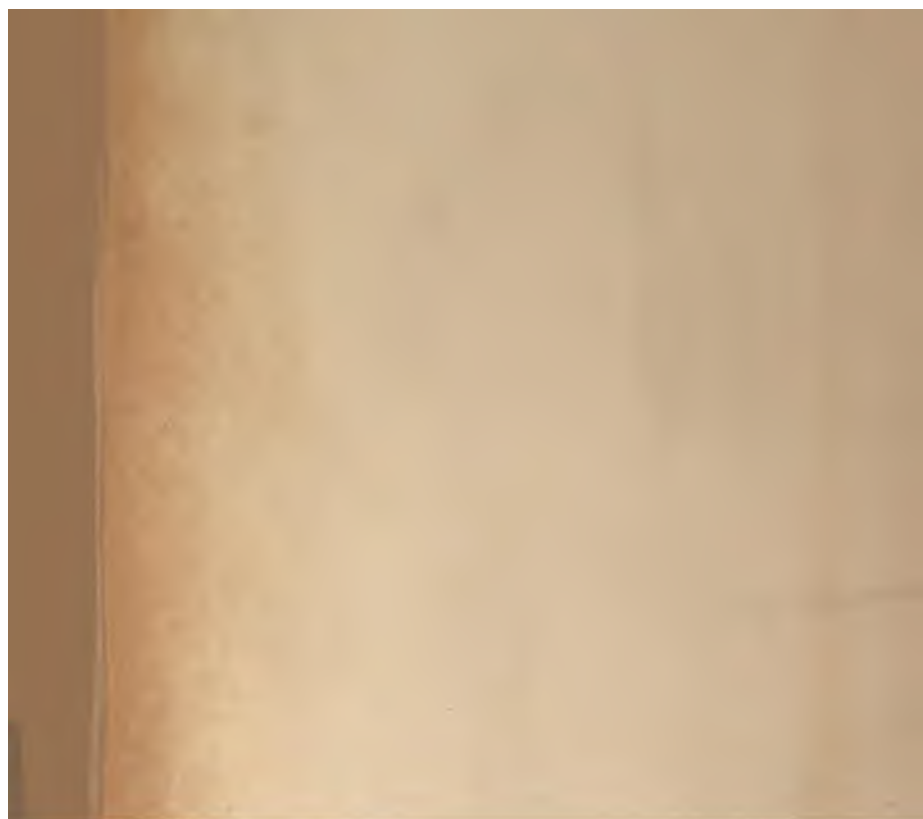
I conclude with regret, because I have not said one

half of [what I intended] to say. . . . I must, however, again give you my warmest thanks for your kind letter. I shall be happy to hear from you again: and do not think it unreasonable that I should request a letter from you, when I feel that the answer which I may make to it will not perhaps be above three or four lines. This I mention to you with frankness, and you will not take it ill after what I have before said of my remissness in writing letters. —I am, dear Sir, with great respect, Yours sincerely,

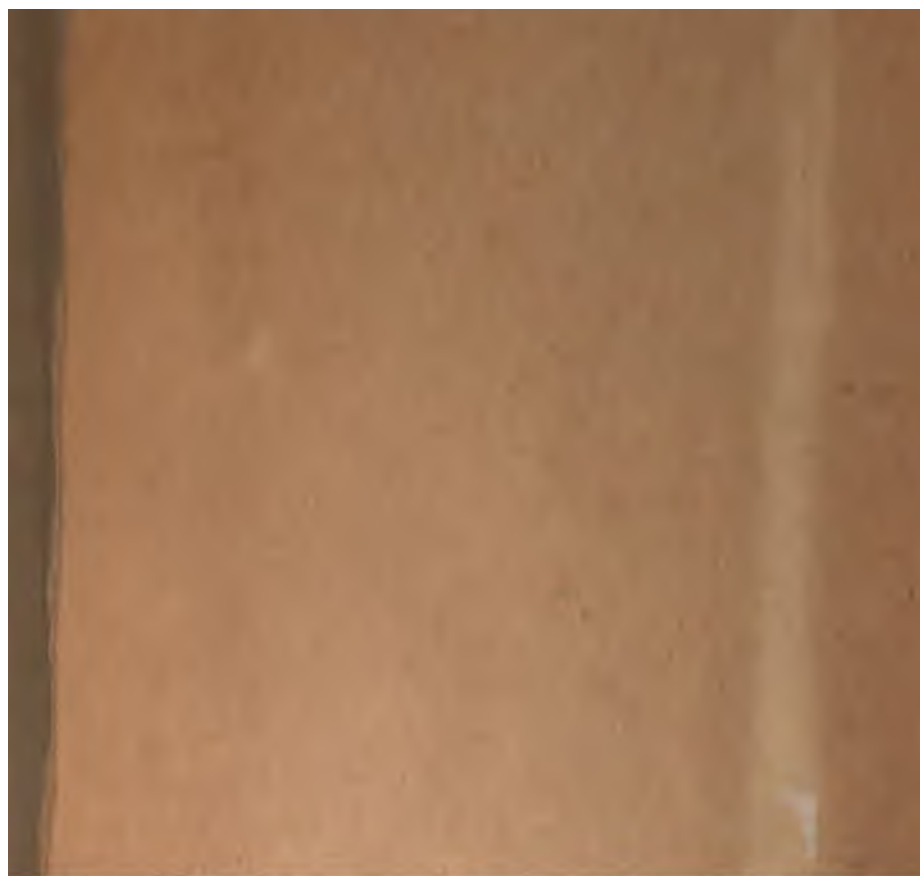
W. WORDSWORTH."

ERRATA IN VOLUME I.

- P. 7, l. 9. 'Reid,' 'Mason,' *should be* 'Reed,' 'Masson.'
- Pp. 28, 144, 146, 150. 'Baron,' *should be* 'Barron.'
- P. 117, l. 4. 'Burnet,' *should be* 'Burnett.'
- P. 117, l. 5. 'Macintosh,' *should be* 'Mackintosh.'
- P. 123, l. 32. '*New Monthly Magazine*,' *should be* 'newly started series of the *Monthly Magazine*.'
- P. 145, l. 11. 'General Peachey,' *should be* 'Lord Somerville.'
- P. 225, l. 11. 'Skakespearian,' *should be* 'Shakespearian.'
- P. 259, l. 17. '1880,' *should be* '1800.'
- P. 221, l. 14. 'May 1801,' *should be* 'July 1800.'
- P. 221, l. 17. 'July,' *should be* 'September.'
- P. 335, l. 29. 'Mr,' *should be* 'Mrs.'







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